

**Safety Talk and Service Culture:
Flight Attendant Discourse in Commercial Aviation**

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Abstract

The discourse of commercial aviation flight attendants has historically received no sociolinguistic attention. To address this gap, this thesis explores how flight attendants use language in workplace-related contexts to construct their professional identity and community. I draw on interactional sociolinguistics (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1994; Tannen 1993) and sociological research (Van Maanen and Barley 1984; Williams 1986; Marschall 2002) to address how flight attendants use language to orient to occupationally related knowledge and practices which contribute to the discursive construction of community.

Data come from two sources: 1) A corpus of 150 textual incident reports submitted by flight attendants to a US government agency which include summaries and proposed causes of the incidents in flight attendants' own words. 2) A corpus of 105 unique discussion threads containing 4,043 posts to a website hosting several discussion forums aimed primarily at flight attendants. The forums are not affiliated with either government bodies or airline employers and are a virtual space for flight attendants to discuss aspects of their job away from occupational demands.

Following Bucholtz and Hall (2004), I show how identity is contextually related and situationally constructed, and emerges from discursive orientations to professional practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance. Moreover, there are certain intersubjective relationships embedded in the discourse which emerge from and add detail to the situational identity constructed through flight attendant discourse. Indexical stances and ideologies which are grounded in institutional training frame and are heightened in the discursive performances of the reports and forum posts. These ideologies motivate and enhance the existing institutional, physical, and sociocultural divisions between flight attendants and pilots, which may have consequences for intercrew cohesion in emergency situations.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABP: Able Bodied Person, a non-crew member who is selected by a flight attendant to assist with an inflight emergency or incident.

AFA: Association of Flight Attendants, the largest flight attendant-specific trade union in the US.

ALPA: Air Line Pilots Association, the largest commercial pilot trade union in the US.

ASRS: Aviation Safety Reporting System, an inflight incident reporting scheme facilitated by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Reports from the ASRS provide the data analysed in Chapter 4.

ATC: Air traffic controllers, responsible for directing aircraft traffic on the ground and in the air.

Cabin crew: Flight attendant.

CRM: Crew Resource Management, a method of communication and interaction implemented to enhance inflight safety, mandated by the FAA, and consistently taught and reiterated to flight attendants and pilots.

FA: Flight attendant.

FAA: Federal Aviation Administration, the US government agency charged with regulating all aspects of aviation in the US.

FAOM: Flight attendant operation manual, a crucial piece of equipment which flight attendants must carry with them at all times whilst at work. The FAOM is regulated and approved by the FAA and issued by airline operators. Flight attendants are responsible for keeping their manuals up to date with current regulations, rules, and practices.

FAR: Federal Aviation Regulation. FARs are imposed by the FAA to regulate air travel and aviation operations. Certain FARs apply to passenger and cabin crew behaviour onboard an aircraft. Violation of FARs can result in both personal and corporate fines. FARs cover most aspects of the flight attendant job, from maintaining a current flight attendant manual to announcements made on the aircraft.

IATA: International Air Transport Association, an international industry trade group of airlines, headquartered in Montreal. The IATA assigns three-letter airport codes which are commonly used worldwide (e.g., LHR for London Heathrow).

LFA: Lead Flight Attendant, who has the responsibility of coordinating communication between pilots and the rest of the cabin crew. The LFA position is above other flight attendants but below pilots in the Chain of Command hierarchy.

NASA: The National Aeronautics and Space Administration, a US government agency which conducts research in aeronautics and aviation safety, and which facilitates the ASRS.

NTSB: National Transportation Safety Board, a US government agency responsible for, among other things, investigating aviation accidents.

Pax: Passenger, passengers.

TSA: Transportation Security Administration, a US government agency responsible for aviation security, including passengers, crew, and cargo, in the US. The TSA is part of the Department of Homeland Security and was established after and in response to the terrorist attacks in the US on 11 September 2001.

Preface

The ideas for this thesis began to emerge whilst I was employed as a flight attendant, and far before I had any idea that I would be doing post-graduate research into the language used by flight attendants. I was assigned a London trip, which made me happy for two main reasons: London is one of my favourite cities, and as an ‘international’ trip it would likely be for me less physically demanding and have a more interesting and longer layover than a ‘domestic’ trip (i.e., a trip which did not leave the US). At the time, there was no dedicated purser position in the flight attendant crew, and the position of ‘lead flight attendant’ (LFA, the equivalent of purser or cabin service director) was assigned by ‘bidding’ for it. In other words, each member of the cabin crew decided, in seniority order, if she or he wished to work as LFA. Because the London trip is demanding in terms of paperwork (Her Majesty’s Customs is a strict taskmaster), unsurprisingly all flight attendants senior to me declined to work as LFA. I could have deferred it down to the most junior flight attendant, but as she had been working only seven months, and I had 13 months of experience on the line, I decided to take the LFA position. One duty of being the LFA is to participate in the pre-flight safety briefing with the captain, a federally mandated task in which both captain and LFA are to participate. Because this was an international flight, there were additional topics to the standard pre-flight safety briefing which the captain was to cover with the cabin crew, including emergency procedures, special passengers, order of service, any predicted turbulence en route which may disrupt service. This theoretical attention to communicative and interactional detail is what I was taught in both my initial and annual recurrent flight attendant training and what I expected to experience during this international flight, my first as LFA going to London: flight attendants and pilots working together as a united inflight ‘team’.

What happened in reality was far different from the theoretical role-playing of training. The captain, who was at that time two months away from retirement, said two things to me during that pre-flight briefing: 1) The flight time; and 2) ‘I like to eat two hours after takeoff.’ These two short phrases were the extent to which we had any interaction before the flight. I was astounded that this person working as the commander of the aircraft and responsible for the lives of everyone onboard would seemingly disregard my important role in aviation safety and security. After all, flight attendants are taught in training that pilots and flight attendants are part of the same inflight team, and flight attendants are the ‘eyes and ears’ of the pilots (as so many pilots have said during other pre-flight safety briefings).

This encounter happened in 1997, and has stayed with me for these past 15 years for several reasons:

1. From my perspective, the captain apparently disregarded everything which I had been taught in training about Crew Resource Management, an interactional and communicative framework pervasive in high-pressure situations such as commercial aviation.
2. The captain covered no safety- or security-related information about the flight.
3. I felt that the captain considered me as his personal waitress.
4. I did not challenge the captain during the briefing, or ask to be told any further information.
5. No other flight attendant in the crew challenged the captain. In fact, many flight attendants did not react at all, indicating that this type of briefing was not unusual.
6. I was so angry at the way I perceived I had been treated by the captain that I said to myself that unless I saw actual smoke in the cabin, I would not set foot in the flight deck or speak to the captain at all during the flight.

Of course, this last point would have been a severe violation of the expectations of the inflight hierarchy known as the Chain of Command (discussed in detail in Chapter 3): the captain is responsible for the entire aircraft and its contents, including passengers, cargo, and crew. As the Lead Flight Attendant, it was my duty to serve as liaison between cabin crew and the captain. If I did not fulfil my duty, I personally was responsible for the breakdown in communication.

It was shortly after this incident that I started thinking about the potential safety implications of this breakdown in the Chain of Command, and how communication, interaction, and talk plays such a vital part in aviation safety. I began to actively observe how my fellow flight attendants talked with pilots, with passengers, and with each other. I started forming hypotheses about how flight attendants use language in different parts of their work lives. Anecdotally I observed that flight attendants appear to have variety in their talk depending on to whom they were talking and for what purposes (discussed further in Chapter 2). I noticed that quite often, many flight attendants appeared to disregard the notion of one unified inflight ‘team’, irrespective of what we were taught in training. It appeared to me that many of my colleagues (including me at times, it must be said) created an invisible barrier separating flight attendants from the rest of the world.

When it came time to write my research proposal, I searched for previous linguistic or linguistic anthropological research in flight attendant talk. It quickly became apparent that there was very little previous research in this area, and thus the research questions I seek to address in this thesis started to take shape. I returned to the idea of this invisible separation of flight attendants from non-flight attendants, and wondered how and why this division happens. I began to question what criteria were necessary and sufficient for inclusion in or exclusion from the flight attendant group. Finally, I wondered how this division might affect the inflight chain of command, upon which many safety-related operations are predicated. Thus, the research questions motivating this thesis are:

1. What is flight attendant discourse? How does it operate in different contexts? How does it create ‘community’ and ‘identity’?
2. What aspects emerge as salient from the discourse of flight attendants in two speech events?
3. Does the discourse in these speech events reflect the existing hierarchy between flight attendants and pilots or mitigate against it?

Question 1 seeks to address this perceived self-separation of flight attendants from non-flight attendants. Do my anecdotal observations hold up to critical scrutiny? If flight attendants are creating a separate group in which membership is limited to only flight attendants, how, linguistically, are they doing this? **Question 2** seeks to investigate what emerges as salient in the talk of flight attendants in two different speech events (cf. Hymes 1986; Schiffrin 1994: 142), which provide the data for the present project. The first speech event is a *safety report* which documents, in a flight attendant’s own words, a non-routine inflight incident which has happened, its cause, and how the flight attendant thinks the incident could be avoided in the future. This speech event is unique in that there are few documents which offer the richness of data from the flight attendant’s distinct perspective. Moreover, the incident reporting scheme is facilitated by a US government affiliated body, thus imbuing the incident report with institutional authority and power. The second speech event are *online discussion forums* aimed primarily at flight attendants, and unaffiliated with airline employers and government bodies. In these forums, flight attendants are free to anonymously discuss their jobs, their opinions about their jobs and co-workers, and many other topics. These two data sources are discussed further in Chapter 2. **Question 3** investigates the data to see if there are reconstructions of

situations in which the Chain of Command hierarchy is made salient by the flight attendant speakers. When the data does reconstruct flight attendant/pilot interactions, is hierarchy an explicit or implicit factor in the discourse? If so, what is the purpose of this orientation to hierarchy? What are the possible and potential outcomes?

Organisation of thesis

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 1 defines and discusses relevant theoretical terms used throughout the thesis, specifically the concepts of discourse; identity; community; institution; power; and institutional authority. The framework for identity construction analysis, drawing on Bucholtz and Hall (2004), is introduced and discussed in terms of how it is applied to the present project. Chapter 2 discusses the data selection and analysis methodologies. The present project is located within interactional sociolinguistics and ethnography of communication paradigms; Chapter 2 discusses how analytical methods from these approaches are applied to written (text-based) data. A taxonomy of extra-linguistic influences on discourse, drawing on Hymes (1986) and Herring (2007), is discussed. Chapter 3 provides information about US flight attendants working in commercial aviation, including their history, current working practices, and aviation institutional demands. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the first set of data, safety reports to a US government agency. Relevant discursive themes in the data are identified, and the components of the identity construction framework (i.e., practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance) are analysed. Chapter 5 is an analysis of the second set of data, posts to internet discussion forums aimed primarily at flight attendants working in US commercial aviation. Themes relevant to the research questions are discussed (i.e., the flight attendant job, passengers, and pilots), and components of the identity construction framework are discussed. Chapter 6 follows from the analysis of the previous two chapters in demonstrating how community and identity, as theorised and defined in Chapter 1, are constructed in the data. I discuss intersubjective relations (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) which emerge from the data and which enhance the situated identities which are constructed in the discourse. Chapter 7 is a brief summary, discussing the limitations of the thesis and directions for future research.

Chapter 1. Theorising flight attendant discourse

1.0 Introduction

I begin the thesis defining theoretical concepts which are fundamental to the analysis. In discussing each concept, I note how it applies to flight attendants in order to provide context on the flight attendant occupation role and the commercial aviation industry in which they work. In Section 1.1, I discuss the concept of *discourse*, and how it is used in the discussion. Section 1.2 sets out the definition and framework of *identity construction* used in the analysis. Section 1.3 addresses the conceptualisation of *community* used throughout the thesis. Section 1.4 defines *institution* and discusses aviation institutions which are important to the analysis. Section 1.5 talks about *power* and institutional authority.

1.1 Discourse

This thesis examines flight attendant discourse, which is used to mean discourse created by flight attendants and incorporates two concepts: ‘flight attendant’ and ‘discourse’. *Flight attendants* (also referred to as cabin crew) are persons employed by commercial airline companies to work in the aircraft before, during, and after passenger-carrying flights for the purposes of providing safety and service to passengers and crew (discussed further in Chapter 3). The remainder of this section defines and discusses *discourse* as used throughout the thesis.

This thesis follows in the tradition of research which views discourse as spoken and written language in use in which context is relevant (e.g., Bucholtz 2011; Gumperz and Hymes 1986; Heath 1983; Jacobs-Huey 2006; Tannen 2005, *inter alia*). As Schiffrin (1994: 31, 32) writes:

...the analysis of language use (cf. Saussure’s parole) cannot be independent of the analysis of the purposes and functions of language in human life. ...discourse is assumed to be interdependent with social life, such that its analysis necessarily intersects with meanings, activities, and systems outside of itself. ...[D]iscourse is viewed as a system (a socially and culturally organized way of speaking) through which particular functions are realized.¹

How we define discourse is linked with the type of analyses we undertake (Schiffrin 1994: 28). For example, defining discourse as a closed linguistic system implies that

¹ I am using ‘discourse’ atheoretically and not distinguishing between Discourse/discourse, as other researchers do (e.g., Kiesling 2004).

extra-linguistic components (such as physical location in which an utterance occurs, speaker of the utterance, or to whom the utterance is spoken) are less important to analysis of the utterance than the morphosyntactic components of the utterance themselves (cf. Chomsky 1965; Hymes 1974). Schiffrin (1994: 29-31) argues that in this closed linguistic system view of discourse, it is not always possible to ‘correctly’ interpret an utterance or piece of text (e.g., in the manner in which the speaker or writer intends) based solely on linguistic systemic components such as syntax. What syntactically appears as a *statement* can nonetheless be considered a *query* when extra-linguistic, contextual factors (such as who is speaking, to whom is the utterance addressed, purpose for the utterance) are incorporated into the analysis. For example, there are several ways a flight attendant could ask a passenger for their drink request (e.g., ‘Would you like something to drink?’, ‘Are you thirsty?’, ‘You look like you need to wake up’) (cf. Schiffrin 1994: 29ff.), depending on contextual factors such as class of service in which the beverage service is taking place (first-class brings with it certain interactional and behavioural norms, not least of which is deference on the part of the flight attendant toward the passenger), time of day (e.g., morning flight versus evening flight), and length of flight (longer flights can mean greater time for interactions with passengers; shorter flights afford very little time for flight attendant/passenger interaction during beverage services).

Discourse or ‘talk’ is used for communication and to achieve communicative purposes (Schiffrin 1994: 386), for example to tell something to someone. Flight attendants use language to communicate and interact with passengers during flights, and use language differently depending on the situation. For example, during a beverage service, flight attendant discourse and interaction with passengers will frequently be constrained to airline-set parameters according to service guidelines. It would be unusual to hear a flight attendant shout ‘sit down’ to a passenger during a routine beverage service on a turbulence-free flight. Yet during an inflight emergency, such an utterance would not be unusual to hear from a flight attendant because the purposes of communication in the two discourse contexts are different. One context is concerned with passenger service and comfort; the other context is concerned with passenger safety. Incorporating context into the definition of discourse works to provide a clearer understanding of ‘the way meaning is produced when a language is used in particular contexts for particular reasons’ (Cameron and Kulick 2003: 16). Moreover, the same utterance can have different meaning when there is a contextual alteration. For example, ‘sit down’ said during a flight can have very different implications if the speaker is a flight attendant addressing a

first-class adult passenger, a child, or a co-worker; if there is a mechanical emergency, or if it is a routine flight with no emergencies. If there is an emergency, flight attendants are trained to shout commands such as ‘sit down’, in order to minimise injury to passengers and crew.

As these hypothetical situations demonstrate, understanding extra-linguistic or pragmatic details in which the discourse is situated is crucial to understanding what it is that the discourse is doing, and what it is that the speaker intends for the discourse to do. Thus discourse is also talk in context (Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Levinson 1997). *Context* includes the extra-linguistic features mentioned above (discussed further in Chapter 2). Other aspects of context related to and potentially influencing flight attendant discourse include but are not limited to *history* (the history of commercial aviation and the history of flight attendants; discussed in Chapter 3); *advertising* (and the concomitant expectations such mass-mediated advertising produces); *institutional constraints* on participants’ behaviour and interaction; *power dynamics* of participants; *occupational training*; *economic factors* (e.g., the financial state of airlines; cost of air travel); and the *culture* (e.g., the national, folk, business, social, and geopolitical situation) in which discourse is situated. For example, advertisements portraying flight attendants as docile and subservient can create an expectation in passengers that flight attendants in real-world situations will behave in the same idealised manner as in the adverts. Flight attendants who are trained to be deferential to passengers may be perceived (by passengers or pilots) as incapable of fulfilling safety- and service-related duties. Airlines which market themselves as low-cost carriers which have few inflight amenities may be perceived (by passengers or the media) as also skimping on safety²; this perception may impact on passenger behaviour toward flight attendants.

One way of interpreting discourse in the manner in which speaker/authors intend it to be understood is correct interpretation of *contextualization cues* (Gumperz 1982, 1992; Levinson 1997; Schiffrin 1994). These extra-linguistic influences on meaning, such as tone of voice, gesture, or in-group terms, ‘serve to highlight, foreground or make salient certain phonological or lexical strings *vis-à-vis* other similar units, that is, they function relationally and cannot be assigned context-independent, stable, core lexical meanings’ (Gumperz 1992: 232). Contextualization cues signal contextual presuppositions; by their nature they are not commented on if they are correctly interpreted. Contextualization cues (re)introduce into the analysis or interpretation

² This perception could be linked to the 1996 ValuJet accident in which all passengers and crew perished (NTSB 1997). See for example Calder (2002).

contextual features which are not explicitly cited in the discourse; they ‘invoke the essential interpretive background for the foregrounded message’ (Levinson 1997: 29). Thus, contextualization cues are there for the interpretation of the audience. They exist unconsciously or consciously, and are evidence of interaction.

In his discussion of contextualisation cues, Gumperz (1992) concentrates heavily on prosodic and other cues related to spoken interaction. Discourse which is textual does not provide such a vocalised range of contextualization cues as are the focus of Gumperz 1992; nonetheless, recent research on computer-mediated communication and other text-based discourse (e.g., Herring 2004, 2003; Kendall 2002) has shown that textual discourse contains lexical and code-based contextualization cues, as I show in Chapters 4 and 5 (see also Georgakopoulou 2011, 1997). The innovation of emoticons, for example, demonstrates the necessity of cues for discourse participants to have multimodal means of communicating and making meaning (e.g., Dresner and Herring 2010; Hinrichs 2006).

1.2 Identity

Identity is a theoretical conceptualisation in much qualitative linguistic research, for example on gender identity (e.g., Hall and Bucholtz 1995); racial and ethnic identity (e.g., Jacobs-Huey 2006; Mendoza-Denton 2011; Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2004); and professional identity (e.g., Holmes and Marra 2005). What these studies show is that there is not one agreed-upon definition of identity as it is constructed in discourse. Researchers have defined it on an *ad hoc* basis: analysing discourse to understand a local (not universal) identity present in the data.

A danger of this type of analysis is that the frameworks for analysis and theorisation can be too context-specific to apply to data and participants which are outside of the particular scope of research. For example, there is a great deal of research on workplace discourse and identity. However, few of these studies are applicable to the study of flight attendants for several reasons. Workplace discourse and identity studies often take place in ‘traditional’ workplaces such as offices and factories (e.g., Cameron 2008; Holmes 2006; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Mullany 2007; *inter alia*). In these types of work settings, the same co-workers interact frequently, often on a daily basis and for the same amount of time each workday (e.g., eight hours). In contrast, flight attendants do not have such a regulated, locally situated workplace. Instead, their workdays are changeable, and can be rescheduled depending on a variety of factors over which flight attendants have little control, for example weather or mechanical problems. Nor do flight attendants interact with the same co-workers on a regular basis as do employees in

traditional workplaces like the ones mentioned above. Instead, many commercial airlines have hundreds, if not thousands, of flight attendants based in numerous cities, so that working regularly with the same flight attendants would be difficult if not impossible, given the many factors which can influence scheduling (e.g., weather and mechanical issues; crew duty time limitations; crew illness; rescheduling; etc.). It is far more realistic that flight attendants will work with different co-workers on every trip. Therefore owing to the assumption that traditional workplace co-workers have regular contact and interaction, few studies on discourse and identity in the workplace are directly applicable to flight attendants (but see emerging research on virtual contexts such as Cotter and Marschall 2008 and Marschall 2012).

In the present analysis I draw on Bucholtz and Hall (2004) who theorise identity as an outcome of the social semiotics of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance. Identity is further accomplished ‘through the production of contextually relevant socio-political relations of similarity and difference, authenticity and inauthenticity, and legitimacy and illegitimacy’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 382), which means numerous contextual factors can be taken into account. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) provide a tangible and accessible conceptualisation of the situational construction of identity in discourse, taking into account social, cultural, and contextual information. Theorising identity as the outcome of social semiotic elements provides a means of analyzing data using a framework which can be adapted to local situations, as well as used to analyse a range of speech events, data sources, and research areas. The framework recognises that identity does not happen in a vacuum, and therefore includes in its theorisation intersubjective relations which are produced and emerge from discourse. Chapter 6 discusses these ‘tactics of intersubjectivity’ further, including how the relations emerge from and are shaped by the data. Figure 1.1 on page 19 provides a visual diagram of the Bucholtz and Hall (2004) framework. As Figure 1.1 attempts to portray, each semiotic is linked to another. For example, indexicality mediates between performance and ideology; performance heightens ideology whilst foregrounding practice. Relationships between the social semiotics are contextualised and further explained in the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.

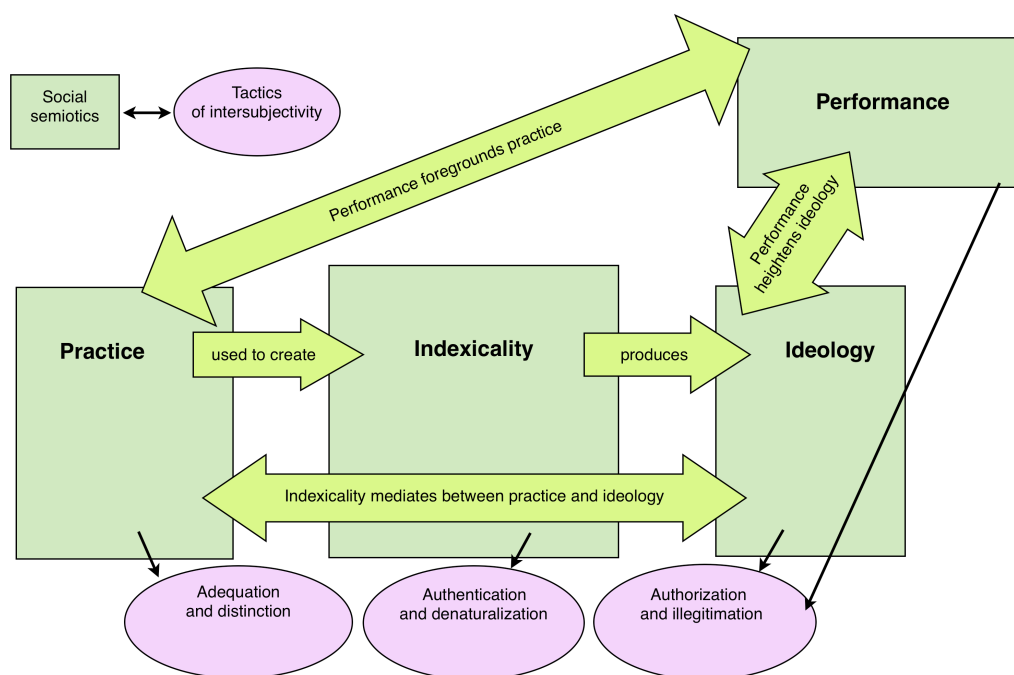


Figure 1.1. Framework for identity construction (adapted from Bucholtz and Hall 2004)

In their framework, the social semiotic elements are practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance. Their relationship to flight attendant discourse will be elaborated on in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Practice

Practice refers to the daily, routinised, repeated actions in which interlocutors engage. There are four broad types of flight attendant practices discussed in the thesis: *institutional, occupational, practical, and linguistic*.

Institutional flight attendant practices include tasks and expectations which stem from institutional regulations, rules, and laws. Examples of institutional practices include enforcement of and compliance with Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs)³ applicable to commercial aviation and the aircraft passenger cabin. A prime example of an institutional practice is the pre-flight safety briefing conducted by flight attendants for the benefit of passengers before departure. This practice is mandated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and is not negotiable (i.e., it must be done before every passenger-carrying flight and cannot be amended from the FAA-approved script. Failure to comply with this FAR results in a financial penalty to both the flight attendant and the airline.

³ See FAA (2012f).

Institution as a theoretical concept and as it is applied in the present project is discussed further in section 1.4, below. Institutional practices which are discursively reproduced in the data are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Occupational practices are those which are related to the job of flight attendant, including practices related to service duties, inflight emergencies (e.g., medical and mechanical emergencies), and emotional labour practices. The sociological concept of *emotional labour* is defined as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ (Hochschild 2003: 7). It is exchanged for monetary value when used in occupational settings, and it is most frequently associated with stereotyped female occupations which involve caring or nurturing of others. Examples of emotional labour practices in the flight attendant occupation are plentiful and include the ubiquitous act of smiling at passengers. Emotional labour and other occupational practices are discussed further in the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.

Practices which I call *practical* are those which develop after working in the job for some time, during which time flight attendants develop familiarity with not only institutional and occupational practices but also the daily contingent realities of commercial aviation, working with passengers, turbulence disruptions, and other real-life situations in which training does not necessarily provide hand-on experience. An example of a practical practice is negotiating occupational expectations of serving beverages with institutional constraints on time available during the flight to safely carry out service-related tasks. Company service standards stipulate that beverage services are to be done on flights longer than a set time; the realities of flying may result in an unrealistic time in which to do the beverage service. Practical flight attendant practices are discussed further in Chapter 5.

These institutional, occupational, and practical practices have associated linguistic practices. *Linguistic* practices are those which develop or exist as a result of institutional, occupational, or practical practices and include the use of technical commercial aviation jargon, occupationally salient terms including slang terms for objects and concepts which have institutionally sanctioned normative names. For example, many airlines use a designated sound in the cabin to indicate to flight attendants that the aircraft is cleared for landing, and to take their jumpseats and prepare for landing. This sound is referred to in communications from the airline as a ‘double chime’; however, in talk between flight attendants and pilots it is referred to as the ‘double ding’. Linguistic practices are discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

Note that the above discussion may imply that these practices are more discrete than they really are. For example, safety-related practices which stem from FARs nonetheless can carry over into occupational practices by involving emotional labour, for example in the form of using socioculturally appropriate normative politeness practices whilst making safety-related demands, thus reframing an institutional command into a polite request, as described in Chapters 4 and 5.

Indexicality

Indexicality has been a useful theoretical concept in examining the link between language and situated identity. The repetition of (linguistic and physical) practices becomes linked with (i.e., indexes) groups of people, or aspects of speakers who commonly do these practices. Ochs (1992) argues that certain linguistic and discourse features take on sociocultural meaning owing in large part to the speakers who become associated with these features. These meanings create direct and indirect indexical stances. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2004: 379) cite the use of certain sentence-final particles in Japanese which directly index a stance of deference. Because women are the primary users of these particles, an indirect indexical stance of ‘female’ is created (cf. Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2004). Kiesling (2004) argues that use of a single word (‘dude’) indexes a stance of heterosexual intimacy amongst young male fraternity members, thus discursively negotiating the tension between the desire for close friendship and the unwanted suggestion of homosexuality.

By necessity flight attendants have to address pilots throughout their working day. The terms of address which flight attendants use create direct and indirect indexical stances, as will be shown in the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5. For example, a flight attendant who refers to the captain of the flight crew by the title ‘captain’ over the course of a three-day trip directly indexes a stance of respect, by explicitly calling attention to the status as airline captain, a job which is difficult to attain and the result of many years of training and experience. Yet it can also indirectly index a stance of deference and distance, by using such a formal title instead of the captain’s first name, which is the more common practice in US airlines. Chapters 4 and 5 explore further indexical stances in the data.

Ideology

Ideology is produced by and reflected in indexical stances (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 379-380). Thus ideologies are evident in and emerge from discourse (cf. Bucholtz 2011; Gal

and Irvine 1995; Irvine and Gal 2009). For example, sentence-final particles in Japanese used primarily by women (i.e., linguistic practice) directly index deference, and indirectly index gender. These indexical stances produce ideologies of gender: women should be deferential in societal interactions, particularly to men. In this sense, ideology is theorised as ‘rooted in or responsive to the experience of a particular social position’ (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994: 58; cf. Heath 1977; Irvine 1989).

Ideologies often concern how individuals ‘should’ behave according to widely held sociocultural norms. Ideologies include language ideologies, the ‘ideas with which participants frame their understanding of linguistic varieties and the differences among them, and map those understandings onto people, events, and activities that are significant to them’ (Gal and Irvine 1995: 970). Thus language ideologies frequently draw on notions of difference and ‘idealised’ speakers. The gender ideologies produced by indexical stances related to sentence-final particle use in Japanese are related to language ideologies: Japanese women should speak in a certain way. Similarly, Shankar (2008) demonstrated that the ‘model minority’ conforms to community norms of how appropriate immigrants ‘should’ speak. These norms are external to the ‘model minorities’ and are part of larger sociocultural ideologies of socioeconomic class, ethnicity, and language. In constructing idealised speakers, language ideologies often ‘erase’ differences between speakers, which then can be used by speakers to mean something salient. For example, some Japanese lesbian women strategically use discourse features which are associated with men to draw on the power associated with men (Abe 2004), violating the language ideology which is concerned with how Japanese women ‘should’ speak.

Ideologies produced by indexical stances in the data are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. The notion of ‘speaking like a flight attendant’ is further discussed in Chapter 6.

Performance

Performance is the fourth social semiotic which comprises identity in the Bucholtz and Hall framework, defined as ‘highly deliberate and self-aware social display... an aesthetic component that is available for evaluation by an audience’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 380). Barrett (1999) demonstrates how linguistic performance differs from mundane talk. He argues that African American drag queens use polyvocalic speech to call attention to the performance of heteronormative femininity, using the stage, clothing, makeup, and other concomitant accoutrements as accessories to heighten and call attention to the performative acts. Performance heightens ideology and foregrounds practice; thus, the

black male drag queens in Barrett's work heighten gender and racial ideologies by calling attention to the linguistic practices which index 'white' and 'female'. Similarly, Alim et al. (2010) show that the performances of freestyle rappers heightens ideologies of race and ethnicity whilst locally negotiating racial and ethnic identities.

Flight attendant activities have variously been theorised as performances, including the balancing of safety and service tasks through a distinctive inflight announcement prosody (Banks 1994), the reproduction of mundane cultural acts in order to mitigate the abnormality of air travel (Murphy 2002), and the voluntary submission of incident reports to a government agency which constitutes a performance of salient safety-related aspects of the flight attendant job (Clark 2010). The analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 expand on the part that performance plays in the situated construction of identity in flight attendant discourse.

Stereotypes

Along with the social semiotics of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance, I suggest that occupational and social history itself plays an influential role in the situated identity construction of flight attendants. Aspects of historical flight attendant images and behaviours have become culturally salient (cf. Barry 2007; Whitelegg 2007). Several popular press books call attention to the past 'glamour' of commercial air travel, when 'stewardesses' and passengers alike appeared to display more attention to their physical appearance than today (cf. McLaughlin 1994; Omelia and Waldock 2003; Stein 2006).

In addition to physical stereotypes about flight attendants, there are stereotypes (generally perpetuated in popular culture media, demonstrating the pervasiveness of such stereotypes) which revolve around occupational practices. For example, Baker et al. (2003) draw on the stereotype that female flight attendants are promiscuous (cf. Moles and Friedman 1973). This 'sexy stewardess' stereotype has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s, when US airfares were government regulated. Airlines competed in service rather than in ticket price, and capitalised on the 'sexual revolution' and concomitant changing behavioural, interactional, and clothing conventions which were happening in US society at the time (Boris 2006). Flight attendants' uniforms at many airlines became more body conscious, highlighting flight attendants' physical attributes.

Another stereotype is that the flight attendant job is inherently unchallenging and involves only service-related tasks, a 'caretaker' stereotype. The caretaker stereotype draws on the early historical role of flight attendants as nurses and health care providers, and later, as ideal wives and hostesses (Barry 2007; see also Chapter 3). To a certain

extent flight attendants do act as caretakers, as they are usually the first responders to medical emergencies on the plane. But Glitsch et al. (2007) demonstrate the physicality and risks involved in manoeuvring heavy trolleys; thus, flight attendant service tasks require physical strength and endurance. Boyd and Bain (1997) show that the aircraft cabin contains a number of health and safety threats to flight attendants. Hochschild (2003) shows that the caring, smiling faces of flight attendants may be genuine or may be an act. Indeed, due to regulations put in place by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as a reaction to the 11 September 2001 (i.e., 9/11) terrorist attacks, flight attendants now act as a different sort of caretaker, namely the safety ‘hero’ (cf. O’Keeffe 2007; Whitelegg 2007).

However untrue many stereotypes may be, they nonetheless exist and are resources upon which flight attendants may draw or to which they may explicitly or implicitly refer in the data. This point is discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.3 Community

The people who work as flight attendants are a diverse group. In the ten years I worked as a flight attendant, I encountered women and men from a range of backgrounds, sexual orientations, ethnicities, educational achievements, and religions. What we had in common was our job, and the shared communicative and interactional norms and expectations which we learned from our occupational experience. Thus, a definition of community for research on flight attendants must give primacy to both the occupation and discourse used as a result of the occupation. In defining community, I draw on the sociological concept of occupational community (Van Maanen and Barley 1984: 295) and the sociolinguistic concept of speech community (e.g., Gumperz 2009; Hymes 1974: 51). I discuss each below.

Occupational community

Van Maanen and Barley (1984: 295) define an occupational community as

a group of people who consider themselves to be engaged in the same sort of work; who identify (more or less positively) with their work; who share a set of values, norms, and perspectives that apply to, but extend beyond, work related matters; and whose social relationships meld the realms of work and leisure.

This definition contains four criteria for membership. Firstly, members consider themselves engaged in the same sort of work. Thus, flight attendants should demonstrate in their discourse that they themselves acknowledge that they work in the same job, do

the same type of tasks, and belong to the same occupation and broader industry. The second criterion is that members identify with the work they do and with their occupation. Thus flight attendant discourse should reflect that they align with their jobs, and that despite some negative aspects of the job, they ultimately choose on their own accord to work as flight attendants. Voluntary participation in discussions centred on the flight attendant job can fulfil this criterion, as can voluntary submission of inflight incident reports. Participants are not compelled by their employers to take part in such settings. That they choose to offers support of the hypothesis that participants are responding as members of an occupational community.

The third criterion creates a normative set of behavioural, interactional, and discursive expectations based on training and experience related to the occupation. With respect to flight attendants, these expectations and norms would likely include reference to occupational and institutional hierarchies that acknowledge the role that each inflight crewmember plays in commercial aviation. The primary hierarchy in commercial aviation is the Chain of Command, which places the captain at the head over other inflight crewmembers (discussed and contextualised further in Chapter 3). The fourth criterion addresses relationships between members, noting that such relationships can blur the figurative lines between being strictly work-related and being friendly and casual, emulating a sort of non-workplace friendship. To fulfil this criterion, we would expect flight attendants to socialise outside of work, and whilst at work to behave less as co-workers and more as friends. Flight attendants may also reframe the hierarchical relationship between captain, first officer, and flight attendants into something more egalitarian.

Previous (non-linguistic) research has argued that flight attendants can be considered an occupational community (Whitelegg 2007; Williams 1986). For example, with little critique or analysis Whitelegg (2007) refers to all flight attendants as an occupational community. Williams (1986) notes the strong solidarity amongst trade union members in considering Australian flight attendants as an occupational community. However, these studies do not incorporate linguistic or discursive analysis into their analyses, as Marschall's (2012, 2002) work does. In his ethnographic work on a software company, Marschall (2012, 2002) incorporates a discursive approach, arguing that occupational community members 'exhibit a special use of language... adopting jargon and technical vocabularies not immediately understandable to outsiders' (Marschall 2002: 53). Marschall's work is useful for the purposes here as it demonstrates the centrality and

importance of language, especially occupationally related jargon and technical language, to the construction of a community.

The discussion now turns to the sociolinguistic theorisation of speech community and its applicability to the present research.

Speech community

As the above theorisation of ‘occupational community’ foregrounds work-related knowledge and participation, so does ‘speech community’ foreground language use and communicative competence. Gumperz (2009: 66) defines speech community as ‘any human aggregate characterised by regular and frequent interaction by means of a shared body of verbal signs and set off from similar aggregates by significant differences in language usage’. Thus a speech community is signified by a shared language or way of speaking which is different to other groups, and which uses this shared language or way of speaking frequently. However, Gumperz (2009) refers to a spoken language only. As argued above in Section 1.1, discourse need not be spoken, but also incorporates textual (writing-based) and non-spoken language (e.g., American Sign Language). Gumperz (2009: 66) does highlight the importance of ‘regular and frequent interaction’ to membership in a discourse-related community; speakers require constant interaction with others in the community in order to maintain their knowledge of the language and its meaning. For example, persons who have worked as flight attendants but are no longer employed in the occupation likely do not have the ‘regular and frequent interaction’ with other flight attendants, and cannot therefore be considered active members of a speech community which is comprised of flight attendants.

Hymes (1974: 51) offers an expanded definition of speech community, defining it as ‘a community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech, and knowledge also of its patterns of use. Both conditions are necessary.’ While Hymes (1974) does not explicitly include specialised spoken, written, or other-modal forms of discourse into his definition, it does include a crucial reference to ‘shared rules’ regarding the interpretation and use of language. In this reference, Hymes hints at the importance of communicative competence (Gumperz 1997, 1982; cf. Saville-Troike 2003; Schiffrin 1994) to a theorisation of community incorporating language use.

Communicative competence is the ability to interact appropriately according to community norms. As Schiffrin (1994: 404) defines it, communicative competence is ‘cultural knowledge that includes social and psychological principles governing the use of

language, as well as abstract “grammatical” rules pertaining to the linguistic code’. Like contextualization cues, discussed above, communicative competence draws on shared knowledge, experiences, stereotypes, and assumptions amongst a community of speakers (cf. Cotter 2010; Heath 1983; Jacobs-Huey 2007).

Communicative competence is one of the key factors in defining a particular community of speakers (that is, distinguishing them from people who happen to speak the same language; cf. Hymes 1974). Thinking of a community of speakers in terms of possessing shared knowledge of communication norms, conventions, and registers (Hymes 2009; cf. Tannen and Wallat 1993) introduces into the analysis sociocultural and contextual information that speakers who share communicative competence possess. This, in turn, can provide a deeper understanding of language use among a given group of speakers. Thus, we can go beyond surface *linguistic* features to understand their *discourse*.

Communicative competence stems and grows and emerges from shared experiences, shared practices, and shared understandings about how the world works; ‘the world’ is defined as the context in which the discourse takes place. In the world of commercial aviation, flight attendants share knowledge about, for example, paying passengers, flight delays, inflight service standards, and checked and carry-on baggage expectations. Flight attendants work with pilots, and therefore share knowledge about how to communicate with pilots in different situations, both work-related and away from the aircraft. Moreover, through experience on the job, flight attendants learn norms and expectations, and gain experience interacting with other groups of people in commercial aviation (e.g., gate agents, baggage handlers, mechanics, flight attendant crew scheduling, flight attendant managers). Chapter 3 provides a further discussion of flight attendants, including their history and training.

Thus I draw from both occupational community (Marschall 2012, 2002; Van Maanen and Barley 1984) and speech community (Gumperz 2009; Hymes 1974) theorisations in defining community as persons employed in the same occupation who share communicative competence of relevant workplaces through the values, norms, perspectives, and knowledge imparted by training and on-the-job experience.

1.4 Institution

The working definition of institution for the present project is informed by Linde (2003: 519), who views an institution as ‘any social group which has a continued existence over time, whatever its degree of reification or formal status may’. Agar’s (1985: 164) working

definition enhances Linde (2003), considering an institution as ‘a socially legitimated expertise together with those persons authorised to implement it’, thus incorporating legitimacy into the definition. Giving an institution legitimacy implies that the institution has a right to exist and a role to play in society. For purposes of the present project, an institution is a socially constructed entity which can exist over time, and which has some degree of legitimacy within a culture or society.

While much research has been done on talk in institutional settings (e.g., Cicourel 1992; Drew and Heritage 1992; Freed and Ehrlich 2010, *inter alia*), very little linguistic research has addressed commercial aviation as an institution, Nevile 2004 being a rare exception. Nevile concentrates on talk-in-interaction between airline pilots at work in the flight deck, but nonetheless provides insight into how professional pilots negotiate tasks through ‘institutional’ discourse. This blanket use of the term institutional to refer to all interaction between pilots at work is problematic in its imprecision. As argued above in Section 1.2, there are tasks, expectations, and discursive interactions involving aviation employees (e.g., flight attendants) which are motivated by the institution of commercial aviation or the institution of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), but which can be more accurately termed occupational (i.e., relating less to the institution of the FAA, for example, and more to the occupation of flight attendant) or practical (i.e., relating to knowledge and experiences which come about through on-the-job, practical experience working, and cannot be realistically taught in a classroom or learned from an operations manual). There are two institutions which concern the present research: the institution of commercial aviation; and the institution of the FAA. I briefly discuss each.

The institution of commercial aviation comprises the industry of commercial aviation and its associated organisations, departments, histories, and procedures. Commercial aviation is an industry which transports fare-paying passengers in aircraft, the vast majority of which owing to federal regulations are staffed with flight attendants. Many thousands of persons are employed in the commercial aviation industry (e.g., flight attendants, pilots, aircraft mechanics, passenger service agents, baggage handlers). The industry of commercial aviation has existed for many decades, and consequently has established a number of procedures, hierarchical structures, and interactional norms. There are a number of different organisations which support the industry of commercial aviation: aircraft and parts manufacturers; commercial airlines; trade unions; pilot, aircraft mechanic, and flight attendant training schemes. These various elements are historically grounded, having begun at different times for different reasons. For example, once passenger flight became a practical commercial reality, there was a demand for

trained pilots; thus, different schools and training programmes were created to produce pilots who were qualified to be trusted with the responsibility of flying aircraft with fare-paying passengers. Flights were originally staffed with ‘stewardesses’, as they were then known, to attend to passenger sickness and to calm nervous fliers.

The second aviation institution informing the thesis is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a US government body which is charged with regulating and overseeing all aspects of commercial aviation in order to create ‘the safest, most efficient aerospace system in the world’ (FAA 2012e). Included in this remit is overseeing the certification of pilots, flight attendants, aircraft mechanics, inspecting flight attendants and pilots to verify they are following and enforcing Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs), the cornerstone of commercial aviation in the US. As with commercial aviation, the FAA has developed various procedures, regulations, and behavioural expectations which are the central framework for the operation of commercial airlines. It is not an overstatement to say that the FAA governs all commercial aviation traffic in the US.

As mentioned above, part of the FAA includes regulation and certification of flight attendants. Flight attendant training (initial and recurrent), operations manuals, and pre-flight safety announcements are all regulated and approved by the FAA; flight attendants must comply with federal regulations upon financial or occupational penalty (fine, suspension, or sacking). Flight attendants must come to work sober, must not use drugs or alcohol whilst working, and must carry their (FAA-mandated and regulated) manuals with them at all time whilst at work.

As a result of these two aviation institutions, there are (aviation) institutional ways of behaving and interacting, according to rules and regulations set down by the institutions of commercial aviation and the FAA. I have mentioned some of these institutional parameters and influences on behaviour above; Chapters 4 and 5 expand this discussion and demonstrate a pervasive institutional influence on flight attendant discourse.

1.5 Power and institutional authority

Institutions are characterised by hierarchy, power, and authority (Freed and Ehrlich 2010: 3ff; cf. Ainsworth 2012); commercial aviation is no exception. Power is theorised as the ability to compel others to act in a way which they may or may not wish to act. As van Dijk (2008: 9) writes, power is ‘control of one group over other groups and their members’. Authority is theorised as institutionally sanctioned power (Bourdieu 1992: 75).

For clarity, I distinguish between the terms ‘power’ and ‘institutional authority’ throughout the thesis.

The institutional authority of flight attendants is derived from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA has the institutional authority to compel airlines, aviation employees, and airplane passengers to act and behave in manners which they may or may not wish, owing to various financial and penal sanctions which are meted out by FAA inspectors when noncompliance with Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) is discovered. The FAA and its representatives cannot act with impunity; however, there is no organisation or body which can penalise the FAA in the way that the FAA can penalise airlines and individuals (cf. FAA 2012d).

Airline employers have institutional authority over flight attendants, for example in the form of appearance guidelines, service instructions, and rules for behaviour. Airlines have the power to tell flight attendants what to say in certain situations and enforce that power through work rules, employment contracts, and ‘check rides’, whereby members of management ride as passengers during flights, to ensure flight attendants are behaving and speaking as they are trained to. This type of power over flight attendants is ideological, in that airline management compels their inflight employees to act, speak, and dress within strictly defined parameters in order that those employees represent the airlines as airline management wishes. Lack of compliance with airlines’ work rules and linguistic ideologies can result in termination, which is a strong motivation for flight attendants to comply with airlines’ regulations.

The FAA and airline employers train flight attendants to understand their part of the Chain of Command hierarchy, an organisational scheme with a clear and strict hierarchy of responsibility, power, and institutional authority. The Chain of Command stipulates that the captain is at the head, with flight attendants falling under his or her command. Knowledge of and participation in the Chain of Command hierarchy for flight attendants starts at initial training, and is reinforced in every flight, during annual recurrent training, and in all communication from both airline employers and the FAA. The Chain of Command hierarchy as it relates to flight attendants is discussed further in Chapter 3; Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the part that the Chain of Command hierarchy plays in identity construction.

There is a ‘circle of symmetry’ with respect to power and institutional authority amongst participants in the institutional discourse context of passenger flights in commercial aviation. All participants in the commercial aviation triad of passenger/pilot/flight attendant have interactive, interrelated, and interdependent power

and institutional authority relations. Passengers have *economic power* over flight attendants and pilots, in that passengers contribute a significant amount of money to profits of commercial airlines. As consumers in a free market, passengers have the ability to spend their money where they choose and are not economically tied to one airline. Passengers can also write and complain to airlines about, for example, poor service or a bad flight experience, giving them additional *consumer* power over flight attendants. At airlines where they are not represented by a trade union under a contract, flight attendants can be sacked for a complaint letter. Finally, passenger safety is a primary aim of commercial aviation: even one accident can damage an airline's reputation, and it can take years for the airline to recover (cf. the 1996 crash and subsequent merger of ValuJet with AirTran⁴). Thus airlines work hard to ensure passengers feel safe and secure when they fly. This type of work is tacit acknowledgement of the economic power which consumers in a free market have.

Pilots have *institutional authority* over flight attendants and passengers, in the institutional role of head of the Chain of Command, and commander onboard the aircraft (see Chapter 3 for discussion of the Chain of Command concept in commercial aviation). Their authority comes in part externally, via the FAA (a US government body), and more tacitly through societal history and marketing by pilot trade unions, constructing a long-lasting, pervasive image of pilots as omnipotent, omniscient father figures in whose hands the general flying public should trust their lives (Ashcraft 2007). This institutional authority can be fragile though, and cracks can appear in the form of public intoxication⁵, pilot errors such as landing at an incorrect airport⁶, and mental breakdown⁷.

Pilots also have *power* over flight attendants and passengers in the ability to control the behaviour and movement of both groups of people. For example, during periods of turbulence, pilots turn on the Fasten Seat Belt sign, compelling passengers to remain seated irrespective of passengers' needs. When the Fasten Seat Belt sign is illuminated, flight attendants must visually verify that passengers have complied with the order, despite the physical danger to flight attendants of being injured during their cabin walk-through due to turbulence. Thus, the action by pilots of turning on the Fasten Seat Belt sign controls passengers and flight attendants. In the simple act of flying, flight attendants and passengers place their lives into the hands of pilots during every flight,

⁴ See, for example, 'ValuJet to acquire AirTran Airways for \$61.8 million', 1997.

⁵ See, for example, 'Airline co-pilot is accused of alcohol use', 2002, and 'Airline gives ex-drunken pilot a second chance', 1993.

⁶ See Zremski (2011).

⁷ See Associated Press (2012).

owing to the fact that pilots are ultimately responsible for flying the aircraft and safely transporting passengers and flight attendants.

Flight attendants themselves are imbued with varying levels of *institutional authority* stemming from the FAA. Flight attendants have institutional authority over passengers (cf. Banks 1994), owing to their occupational mandate of enforcing Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs), such that it is a US federal offence for a passenger to disobey a command or directive from a flight attendant. The reinforcement of institutional authority comes via a military-inspired uniform (cf. Boris 2006). Additionally, flight attendant trade unions have been vocal (especially after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US) about flight attendants' role in aviation safety and security, emphasising their important part in avoiding another similar terrorist attack. Indeed, flight attendants have been instrumental in stopping a person attempting to light an incendiary device onboard a trans-Atlantic flight⁸.

Linguists have argued that power and institutional authority are co-constructed and reproduced in talk (Benwell and Stokoe 2006; cf. Foucault 1972; Thornborrow 2002; van Dijk 2008, Weatherall 2002, *inter alia*). Speakers have agency, and can ostensibly choose to orient to existing power dynamics. Power and institutional authority are achieved through active complicity of all participants: if the passenger does not obey the flight attendant's command, then there is a breakdown of institutional authority. The passenger who obeys the flight attendants command is reinforcing the institutional authority of the flight attendant (and the FAA). The passenger who ignores the flight attendant's command but instead obeys the same command when given by a pilot is reinforcing both the power and the institutional authority of pilots over flight attendants.

Away from the physical location of the aircraft and face-to-face encounters with other flight attendants, pilots, and passengers, flight attendants are not compelled to discursively reproduce the power, institutional authority, and hierarchy integral to commercial aviation. There is no rule stating that flight attendants must show deference to the captain away from the aircraft. However many speakers do in fact reproduce institutional authority and power structures in their discourse when there is no real or practical need to do so. For example, the drag queens in Barrett (1999) draw on hegemonic white femininity in their discursive performances, yet drawing on these iconic representations of a group of people works to produce the societal power that white,

⁸ See Ashenfelter and Baldas (2012).

Christian females have. Chapters 4 and 5 address the extent to which hierarchy, power, and institutional authority influence and are reproduced in the data.

1.6 Summary

It has been the goal of this chapter to define the main theoretical concepts used throughout the thesis. I follow Schiffrin (1994) and others in analysing discourse alongside context in which the discourse is situated. Identity is contextually related; thus any analysis which attempts to understand identity must look at contextualising factors which influence and constrain discourse. Similarly, analysing community construction requires understanding what is shared with respect to the profession of flight attendant. Significant factors in the flight attendant profession include the institutions of commercial aviation and the Federal Aviation Administration. The following chapter discusses the data and analytic methods used in the thesis.

Chapter 2. Data and methodology

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the two professional contexts from which I draw data for the present project. I explain my collection methodology for inclusion in the thesis corpora. I then discuss the analytic methods I employ, highlighting the benefits of each framework to the analysis. The chapter ends with a discussion of methodological issues which became relevant during the course of the project.

2.1 Data: Background and collection methodology

Data come from two sources: a database of safety reports; and a website of discussion forums aimed primarily at flight attendants. I supplement these data with insider knowledge gained from my ten years of experience as a US-based flight attendant working in commercial aviation.

2.1.1 Safety reports

The first source of data is a corpus of 147 safety reports written between 2003 and 2008 by flight attendants and voluntarily submitted to a US government aviation safety regulatory body, the Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS). The reports are from three Cabin Attendant Report Sets which are compiled and made publicly available by the ASRS. The ASRS is a part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). The aim of the ASRS is to ‘[collect, analyze, and respond to] voluntarily submitted aviation safety incident¹ reports in order to lessen the likelihood of aviation accidents’ (ASRS 2012d). The safety reports are submitted by members of several different aviation employee groups, including pilots, airplane mechanics, air traffic controllers, and flight attendants. There are separate reporting forms for each employee group². While submitting the reports is voluntary, the ASRS is promoted and publicised in different flight attendant bases by the largest flight attendant trade union in the US, the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) (Candace Kolander, AFA, personal communication).

¹ An ‘incident’ is a non-routine event which does not result in either damage to the aircraft or human fatality. An incident is contrasted with an ‘accident’, which is a non-routine event which does result in either damage to the aircraft or human fatality, or both.

² See Appendix A for the Cabin Crew Reporting Form.

Approximately 2,000 incident reports are submitted per year to the ASRS by flight attendants, compared with over 32,000 incident reports submitted per year to the ASRS by air carrier pilots (Linda Connell, Program Director, ASRS, personal communication). Not all reports which are submitted are accepted by the ASRS and made available for search in the publicly accessible online database. Searching the publicly available ASRS online database of incident reports for reports submitted by flight attendants returns 2,967 reports; searching for reports submitted by pilots returns 58,111 reports. Searching the database for all available reports for commercial airlines³ returns 71,497 reports⁴. Thus my corpus of 147 reports represents approximately 5% of publicly available reports submitted by flight attendants and 0.2% of all reports available at the ASRS online database.

The safety reports are comprised of two sections. The first section is a factual form, with space to provide information such as flight number, type of aircraft, departure airport, arrival airport, etc. The second section is an account of the incident, written by the person submitting the report. This account, referred to as a 'narrative' in the report form, is optional to submit and does not have a pre-defined structure established by the ASRS. Persons submitting reports are asked to provide details about incidents, including their opinion of contributing factors and how incidents could be prevented in the future. The length of the narrative portion of the report varies, with no set minimum or maximum. The audience for whom the reports are primarily written and intended (i.e., the primary audience), discussed below in greater detail, are the ASRS analysts, comprised of former pilots, mechanics, and air traffic controllers. There is currently no ASRS analyst who has worked as a flight attendant.

While the ASRS report form refers to the qualitative portion of the report as a 'narrative', this thesis does not approach or analyse it drawing from the significant body of work on sociolinguistic narratives (e.g., de Fina, Schifffrin, and Bamberg 2006; Labov and Waletzky 2003, Thornborrow and Coates 2005; *inter alia*) or narratives in the workplace (e.g., Dyer and Keller-Cohen 2000; Holmes and Marra 2005; Linde 2003, 2001, 2000; Santino 1978, *inter alia*). The 'narrative' in the sociolinguistic sense is not the main discursive unit of analysis; nor does the present project attempt to contribute to the existing canon of research on narratives. The present analysis is less concerned with

³ I.e., airlines subject to Part 121 of the Code of Federal Regulations; see eCFR (2012) for further information.

⁴ Accessed 9 May 2011.

the technical structure of a narrative with respect to workplace discourse, and more concerned with how flight attendant discourse contributes to the construction of community and situated identity. I thus use the terms ‘report’ and ‘safety report’ to refer to the qualitative ‘narrative’ portion of the safety reports which are the focus of analysis in Chapter 4.

The corpus of reports covers a five-year time span, which provides an opportunity to examine discourse features over a range of years and determine if certain linguistic features are present and persistent throughout the report discourse. The reports offer first person accounts of many different types of inflight incidents, ranging from medical emergencies to conflicts between passengers and cabin crew, to conflicts between cabin and flight crew. Neither the three report sets which comprise my corpus nor the online database of publicly available reports are meant to be a proportional representation of incidents which have occurred. Each report set begins with certain caveats for readers which make this nonrepresentation factor clear. The primary strength of the reports, indeed the reason for inclusion in this thesis, is their uniqueness. They are one of the few institutionally sanctioned speech events in aviation where flight attendants provide accounts of inflight incidents from their own perspectives. The reporting agency explicitly asks flight attendants for their input on the cause of incidents, and how reported incidents could be avoided in the future. To my knowledge, the ASRS is the only such reporting scheme in the United States, and is one of a handful throughout the world⁵. Flight attendants witness a significant amount of irregularity in commercial aviation during their working days; the safety reports provide a unique opportunity to attempt to understand how this discourse contributes to the existing body of research on identity and community construction.

The ASRS analysts are comprised of ‘highly experienced pilots, air traffic controllers, and mechanics, as well as a management team that possess aviation and human factors experience’ (ASRS 2012a). Therefore, the primary audience for the reports is comprised of aviation employees who have no lived or practical experience working as flight attendants. Research has argued that despite spending time in the passenger cabin, pilots and other employees do not possess the same knowledge about the job of flight attendant and its related tasks and expectations as flight attendants themselves do (Chute and Weiner 1995, 1994). Thus, analysts must rely solely on the report discourse to

⁵ See ASRS (2012c) for a more complete list of similar reporting schemes.

explain and understand all aspects of the flight attendant job that are involved during the reported incidents.

As stated above, pilots serve as ASRS analysts who are the primary audience for the safety reports which are written and submitted by flight attendants. There are differences in the amount of power and institutional authority that pilots and flight attendants have (discussed further in Chapter 3). Previous research has shown that there is a significant difference in expectations about aviation knowledge between pilots and flight attendants, which has contributed to poor communication between pilots and flight attendants (Chute and Weiner 1996, 1995). These differences could influence the incident report discourse composed by flight attendants, and is a hypothesis explored in Chapter 4.

2.1.2 Forum posts

The second source of data is a public website containing thirty-nine discussion forums (also referred to throughout the thesis as ‘the forums’). All forums are concerned with aviation discussion from the perspectives of inflight crewmembers. Four of the thirty-nine forums are intended for exclusively flight attendant participants (i.e., non-flight attendants are discouraged from participation in discussions); there are three forums which are explicitly targeted toward pilots. The remaining thirty-two forums are ostensibly open to all persons irrespective of affiliation with commercial aviation. Virtually all active users in the forums are current aviation employees; of these active users, over 95% self-identify as being currently employed as flight attendants. Two forums have restricted participation policies; active participation is only for employees of a specified airline and is granted after requesting ‘writing permission’. However, these restricted forums are available for public viewing once a reader is a registered user at the website.

Data is drawn from the 67,743 discussion threads (i.e., unique virtual conversations; also referred to as threads throughout the thesis) in the website database⁶. I have compiled a corpus of 105 different discussion threads, which is approximately 0.2% of the total number of publicly available threads. The discussion threads are comprised of posts (i.e., user contributions); the threads were made between November 2006 and December 2009⁷. The corpus has been compiled to address the focus of the present project. Thus, threads which discuss topics extraneous to the research questions (e.g., policies or procedures which were unique to a specific airline), have been excluded from

⁶ Numbers are correct as of 10 May 2011.

⁷ All participants are aware that the forums are publicly accessible.

the corpus. Included in the corpus are threads which discuss or contain reference to the job of flight attendant; flight attendant/pilot interaction and communication; and aviation hierarchy. Threads which met these criteria but which could not be anonymised or which contained identifying details which could not be removed were disregarded and not considered for inclusion in the corpus.

Participation in the discussion forums is comprised of several roles. Forum users who actively engage in discussion by starting threads or posting to already existing threads can be considered active participants. These active participants are also referred to as posters in the thesis. The primary audience of the discussion forums is comprised of both forum users who actively participate in discussion threads and forum members who do not actively participate in discussion threads (sometimes called 'lurkers'). As noted above, the majority of forum users self-identify as flight attendants; therefore, the primary audience of the forums is comprised of peers of the active participants. Note that the forum primary audience differs from the primary audience of the safety reports, in that the safety report primary audience contains no flight attendants. Not all forum users are registered, and there are many who only read threads and are not active participants. While it is impossible to provide concrete numbers or even estimates of non-registered forum users who are not active members (i.e., 'guests' to the forums), the forum home page provides information on active users and guests who are reading the forums at the time one is visiting the site. During the time I was collecting data, registered user to guest ratio averaged approximately one registered user to thirty guests visiting the site at any one time.

Active participants are aware of the presence of non-active participants, who can have an influence on public discussions. For example, there is a deep-seated belief among the active participants of the forums that representatives of airline management read their message boards, looking for posts which reveal confidential information (the public posting of which might result in an employee being censured in some way by their employer). Additionally, some members believe that representatives from the FAA read the forums. As with certain airline information, there is information considered by the FAA to be confidential and not to be publicly discussed. Some participants actively discuss the possibility of the FAA reading their posts and state in their posts their adherence to FAA regulations. Finally, some participants discuss the fact that the forums are publicly accessible and that passengers may read their posts.

The discussion forums are not affiliated with governmental regulatory bodies, nor are they sanctioned by airline employers. These two factors contrast with the ASRS

reports, which are both affiliated with a government regulatory body and sanctioned by airline employers. Active forum users post messages and participate in discussion threads using self-selected pseudonyms (cf. Clark 2007). The anonymity which these pseudonyms (called ‘user names’) offer is one attraction of the forums for many users. In the process of ‘venting’ in their posts, participants can reveal personal opinions which may or may not be sanctioned by their airline employers or passengers, under the guise of their user names. This information is frequently discussed amongst flight attendants in face-to-face talk, such as in aircraft galleys and airlines’ inflight services offices. Thus, the discussion forums provides a unique insight into flight attendant discourse amongst peers.

Another feature of the forum discourse is the opportunity it provides for interaction from participants who are physically located in different parts of the world. Participants are able to remotely discuss topics related to their jobs as flight attendants with other forum users who physically may be many thousands of miles apart, but through the medium of the forum website, are virtually close (cf. Boellstorff 2008; Kendall 2002). As long as participants have access to the internet and the website which hosts the forums, they can participate in virtual conversations which can stretch over time. Although forum discourse is asynchronous (cf. Herring 2003), there is nonetheless discursive interaction amongst forum participants, as shown in the sometimes lengthy⁸ discussion threads. Topics for discussion are introduced by forum members. Whether a topic is picked up on by others and develops from a single post into a discussion thread is dependent on several factors, including but not limited to the interest shown by other forum participants in the topic’ the relevance of the topic to participants, and the number of forum participants who have access to the website.

Discussion forums are moderated, meaning there is an ostensible gatekeeper who has power over participants. However, moderators are also forum participants, and can actively participate in discussions. Moderators have the ability to lock a thread (i.e., disallow further posts to the thread), delete part or all of a post, and ban registered users of the forums from posting. These moderator abilities or privileges are infrequently exercised, with the most common action being censoring a post, owing to a participant posting confidential information (e.g., names of layover hotels).

The forums provide a level of privacy and anonymity (thanks to the pseudonymous nature of the user names) behind which participants can perhaps feel freer

⁸ ‘Length’ in this case refers to the number of posts in a thread.

to say things which they might not say in person, or to a relative stranger who is recording them, and taking notes during the flights. This type of behaviour on the part of a participant observer-researcher can seem suspicious to many people, and to flight attendants perhaps even more so because it is what happens during ‘check rides’ conducted by FAA inspectors and airline management, which often result in the observed flight attendants receiving a fine or some other kind of censure. Therefore, flight attendants are protective of their privacy, and suspicious of outsiders wishing to ‘observe’ them (but see Chapter 7 for suggestions for further research).

I first began visiting this website in 2002 when I was working as a flight attendant. I had made three posts to the forums when I was still employed as a flight attendant; subsequently I have made ninety posts to various forums at the website since 2007. It is fair to say that I have engaged in both native participation (cf. Jacobs-Huey 2002) and observation from a distance in the forums. When I began data collection for the present project, I announced publicly my intentions by starting a discrete thread entitled ‘Flight attendant/pilot communication research’. Additionally, I made it clear in my public profile at the website that I was engaging in research on the discourse of flight attendants.

I did not anticipate that participants would react negatively to my use of the forum discourse. After all, I had been employed as a flight attendant, and considered the other participants as former colleagues, not as institutionally distant informants. However, I was surprised at some of the responses to my introduction. I received one private message from a participant who expressed a desire to know my ‘true intentions’ and what I was going to do with the ‘lab rats’⁹. While most forum participants were either neutral or positive in their publicly expressed opinion toward my research, there were three participants who publicly expressed hostility and suspicion toward me via posts in a discussion thread at the website. I was accused of being a spy for company management and a ‘troll’ (i.e., someone who posts in threads for the primary purpose of annoying other users, or causing aggravation; cf. Herring et al. 2002). I found these reactions at first distressing, then intriguing: their strong reactions to academic research on discourse from their publicly accessible discussion forums shows how protective the users feel about their virtual space. Even I, a former flight attendant, was considered suspect. I have excluded from the corpus discourse from form participants who expressed any negative opinions or attitudes toward my research.

⁹ After several private message exchanges, this participant was satisfied with my motives.

2.1.3 Summary

Both the safety reports and discussion forum data provide access to ‘behind the scenes’ flight attendant discourse; that is, discourse outside of the usual talk experienced by the majority of non-flight attendants. The incident reports provide an unparalleled access into the insight of flight attendants who have experienced a rare event: a non-routine inflight incident. The vast majority of commercial flights operated by US airlines are routine, and do not involve incidents or accidents. Thus, most flight attendants do not regularly experience these types of unusual events. However, the majority of flight attendant training is occupied by dealing with non-routine events such as the ones being reported. Therefore the incident reports provide a unique opportunity to understand how flight attendants themselves witnessed events for which they are well trained, yet in which they are most likely inexperienced. The internet discussion threads provide another type of flight attendant talk, that is, talk ‘off the clock’ yet which still primarily concerns their jobs and tasks. The two sets of data are written for different primary audiences which I argue has an influence on the discourse. This point is pursued in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.2 Frameworks for analysis

I employ two methodological approaches to the analysis of data: interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Goffman 1981, 1974; Schiffrin 1994, 1993; Tannen 1993) and ethnography of communication (e.g., Gumperz 1982; Gumperz and Hymes 1986; Hymes 1986, 1974; Saville-Troike 2003). These frameworks are complementary in that they recognise the salience of context (discussed in Chapter 1) to interpretation and analysis of the work that speakers are accomplishing through their discourse. A shared feature of these frameworks is analysing the data incorporating contextual, situational-specific, and ethnographic information, to better understand how the participants themselves display an understanding of what they are doing with their talk (Schiffrin 2006, 1994). Additionally, both frameworks consider the speaker as a social actor, recognising that speakers are part of a larger social structure and discourse is motivated and influenced by multiple factors external to talk (cf. Duranti and Goodwin 1992; Fairclough 2001; Heath 2012; Labov 1972, 1963).

2.2.1 Interactional sociolinguistics

Interactional sociolinguistics is an analytic framework which focuses on both situated language use and the active role that speakers have in producing it, and on the

relationship speakers assume in speech situations and speech events with other participants in their discourse. A fundamental concept behind interactional sociolinguistics methodologies is the belief that meaning is situated (Gumperz 1992a; 1982; Schiffrin 1996, 1993). Research which seeks to understand what discourse is doing or accomplishing in a setting should incorporate contextual factors into the analysis. In the present study, interactional sociolinguistic methods provide a deeper understanding of the discursive strategies employed by flight attendants to assume relationships or positions with respect to other participants and the primary audience (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1994). Central concepts in understanding these relationships are participation framework, footing, framing, and alignment.

Participation framework refers to the relationships or roles speakers take up with respect to their utterances or discourse within a given frame or speech event (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1994; Tannen 1993). There are three such relationships or roles with which this concept is concerned: the animator, who produces the discourse; the author, who creates the discourse; and the principal, who is responsible for the discourse. Below, I discuss three flight attendant-specific participation frameworks which serve to ground these theoretical concepts in commercial aviation: *safety talk*, *service talk*, and *social talk*. While the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 do not explicitly draw on these theoretical concepts, the discussion below serves to provide additional information about flight attendant discourse.

What I call *safety talk* is the type of discourse which has safety as its central message, and which is spoken by flight attendants mainly for ensuring, enhancing, or enforcing safety (e.g., in flight, though not necessarily restricted to on the aircraft). One criterion for safety talk is that flight attendants act only as animators. Flight attendants act as animators in safety talk participation frameworks when they replicate evacuation commands or repeat safety briefings to passengers, as Banks (1994) argues in his study of the unique prosody of flight attendants making safety announcements in the cabin.

The bulk of flight attendant training time is related to safety and security training. Flight attendants have very strict guidelines on what they can say during emergencies, particularly emergency evacuations. Emergency drills are conducted every year during training, rehearsing different scenarios, with the intention that should an actual emergency occur, flight attendants will have already ‘practiced’ it during training, including preparing the cabin for the emergency landing and shouting emergency commands. These repeated rehearsals serve to solidify what needs to be said during an emergency; that is, what airlines and the FAA mandate what must be communicated by

flight attendants to passengers in order to successfully evacuate the aircraft. To pass both initial and annual recurrent training, flight attendants must shout commands verbatim; they cannot improvise or ad-lib.

Service talk refers to flight attendant discourse which centres on the service aspect of their job (cf. Clark 2007). In a service talk participation framework, flight attendants act as animator and author of their talk. Unlike the call centre workers in Cameron (2008), flight attendants do not have codified interactional standards to which they must conform via 'scripts' to which they must follow. During beverage and meal services flight attendants are accomplishing occupational tasks; consequently, flight attendants interact with customers whilst orienting to the goal of the particular service encounter. Thus, during beverage services flight attendants can use a range of discursive strategies to accomplish the same task of serving a beverage. While flight attendants frequently repeat the same phrases during beverage services, most vary their talk according to several factors and influences (e.g., number and type of passengers, mood, flight time). For example, during an early morning flight, flight attendants may not do a full beverage service, which involves bringing out the drinks trolley, as it may cause noise and commotion which may disturb sleeping passengers. They may instead walk quietly through the cabin, offering orange juice, coffee, and other beverages upon request. This type of quiet service talk which reflects situational awareness contrasts with an early evening flight full with many businesspeople, when flight attendants conduct a full beverage service, selling alcoholic beverages and often raising their voices to be heard over chatting passengers.

Social talk refers to discourse in which the flight attendant is animator, author, and principal, for example in discourse between flight attendants themselves. Social talk reflects occupational and institutional knowledge and practices, albeit using discourse which perhaps is not sanctioned or approved by airlines or the FAA (e.g., referring to pilots as 'bus drivers'). On the aircraft, social talk frequently happens in the galley, which is the food and beverage storage area as well as where flight attendant jumpseats are located and thus not intended for passenger use or occupation. Flight attendants frequently use the galley to store their handbags and personal food items they have brought with them from home for the flight or trip. The galley is where flight attendants most often eat their crew meals or other food. It is a place where flight attendants conduct their service briefings. There is usually a curtain divider which separates this space from the passenger cabin. Thus, the galley can be considered a private space for flight

attendants, as it is not a space for either passengers or pilots. Social talk can also take place away from the aircraft, for example in layover hotels and crew lounges in airports.

Footing (Goffman 1981; Schiffrin 1994) refers to the relational and social positions speakers assume with respect to other speakers within a speech event. These positions emerge in discourse (cf. Kiesling 2001a; Tetreault 2009; Trester 2009). Footing can be indicated by, among other things, the code or key or register a speaker uses in discourse, and if the speakers switches code depending on interlocutor or speech event (Goffman 1981: 126). Footing is closely linked to the concept of framing (Goffman 1974; cf. Tannen 1993), the discursive display of how participants understand, make sense of, and demonstrate their awareness of what is happening during a speech event (cf. Kendall 2008). Schiffrin (1993: 233) defines frame as ‘what people think they are doing when they talk to each other’. This definition can be expanded to reflect written discourse as well.

Footing is a key concept in understanding the relationships speakers assume or how they implicitly align with other participants in discourse, and in turn investigating identity construction. Drawing on Goodwin and Goodwin (1990), Georgakopoulou (2011: 10) defines alignment as including ‘not only agreement with a position expressed in the discourse but also a participant’s affiliative orientation to the talk in progress and to the participants’ themselves. Alignment in written discourse can be demonstrated through the use of contextualization cues, as Georgakopoulou (2011) shows in her work with private emails. Tannen (2004) uses the footing concept in her analysis of dogs and family discourse, arguing that family members use constructed dialogue in the voice of pets as a resource for assuming a footing that might be hurtful to others. However, the potentially face-threatening footings are mitigated by the polyvocality of the dogs’ constructed dialogue (cf. Bakhtin 1981). Speaking through the dog is a useful discursive strategy which allows a family member to assume a footing which could be a threat to family solidarity or unity. In her article on discourse practices and identity construction in a computer-mediated speech context, Graham (2007: 746) uses the concept of footing (and the related concept of positioning; cf. Davies and Harré 1990) to account for the ‘fluid processes and overlapping [identities] created in interactions’ within an online discussion forum. In her study, members of a discussion forum centred on issues affecting the Anglican Church assumed footings which were interpreted as polite or impolite based on the forum’s interactional norms. These footings in turn contributed to the projection and performance of several contextually relevant identities in the forum. Whilst Graham’s

(2007) article does not explicitly define identity, she demonstrates how footing can be used to analyse discourse in a discussion forum.

Meanwhile, Matoesian (1999) uses footing to understand how a defendant on trial for rape is able to shift the frame of being interrogated as a witness (indeed as the defendant) and its related defendant footing, to that of an expert witness. The defendant is able to manipulate the questioning by using discursive strategies such as terms and phrases associated with a medical doctor to shift footing from that of a powerless defendant to an expert witness. The result of the trial is that the defendant is acquitted, which Matoesian suggests is due in part to his ability to shift footing and reframe his direct examination by the prosecuting attorney. Matoesian's analysis demonstrates the theoretical power of footing. In focusing on the trial's participants and their socially and institutionally expected behaviours, Matoesian demonstrates the role that frame shifts and footing play in constructing situated and local identities. The defendant was able, through using language associated with a different participant role (expert witness) to shift footing and project the associated societal status and institutional authority which a medical doctor has in American society to the jury, who in turn acquitted him of rape. We will see similar shifts, with different consequences, in the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.

In each of these studies, the concept of footing is used to gain a deeper understanding of how interlocutors assume or display their relationships with other participants in the discourse. We do not expect discourse participants to explicitly state their relationships with others, particularly if there are differences in power or institutional authority which can influence the discourse. Using the concept of footing allows us to theorise the influence of the audience and participants on the speaker's discourse. These theoretical concepts become relevant in the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.2.2 Ethnography of communication

The ethnography of communication (e.g., Duranti 1997a; Hymes 1986, 1974; Saville-Troike 2003) as an analytic paradigm is, broadly speaking, concerned with 'the interaction of language and social life' (Hymes 1974: 29), and more specifically with understanding what is meaningful in communication in a group of speakers (e.g., a speech or occupational community; discussed in Chapter 1), and why it is meaningful. 'Meaningful' is relative and dependent on the context in which discourse is situated; thus, ethnography of communication methods (adapted from anthropology field methods) investigate not only the words being said in communication, but the 'extra-linguistic' or

pragmatic factors which contextualise, motivate, and are embedded in the communication (cf. Gumperz and Hymes 1986).

For example, Cotter (2010: 2) uses anthropological fieldwork techniques to understand ‘ways of speaking’ in the field of journalism. As a former journalist herself, Cotter has spent many years in the profession learning about the broader community of journalists she ultimately researched. In discussing the ‘craft’ of journalism, Cotter (2010) shows various contextual influences on journalists’ discourse, including what constitutes communicative competence. Similarly, Heath (2012, 1983) uses ethnography of communication methods to understand language socialisation processes of three different, yet closely tied, communities. She spent many years in the field living in the communities, learning the intricate influences on and processes of how each community teaches its young to speak. Like Cotter (2010) and Heath (2012, 1983), I have spent several years with the group of speakers I am now studying, in my case ten years working as a flight attendant for a US airline. During this time, I gained communicative competence in this community and am deeply familiar with the contexts in which flight attendant discourse takes place. I bring this knowledge to the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5.

A useful method of investigating what is meaningful in communication (e.g., the contexts in which discourse is situated) has been developed by Hymes (1986: 58-71) in the form of a taxonomy for understanding influences on discourse (reproduced in Table 2.1). This taxonomy, referred to as the SPEAKING grid, seeks to approach the analysis of discourse from the perspective of understanding what, if any, are the contextual influences on discourse external to the linguistic code. Herring (2007) has adapted Hymes’s original taxonomy for the study of computer-mediated discourse (CMD). In proposing a ‘faceted classification scheme’ for CMD, Herring has amended several components for virtual speech situations and speech events such as the ones I use. These alterations are especially useful in the analysis of the flight attendant forum discourse. Below, I discuss Hymes’s (1986) taxonomy and each of the SPEAKING components with respect to the data, citing Herring’s (2007) CMD-focused alterations when relevant.

Table 2.1 SPEAKING grid: Components of discourse (Hymes 1986: 58-70)

S	Setting; Scene – physical circumstances and setting of discourse act; the ‘psychological setting’; cultural definition of an occasion as a certain type of scene
P	Participants – speaker(s), or sender(s); addressor(s); hearer(s), or receiver(s), or audience; addressee(s)

E	Ends – purposes, outcomes, goals and strategies of discourse/communication/talk
A	Act sequence – order of interaction
K	Key – the manner, tone, and/or spirit in which a speech act is done (e.g., mocking, serious)
I	Instrumentalities – channel (medium of transmission of speech, e.g., written, oral) and forms of speech (e.g., varieties); means or agencies of speaking
N	Norms – norms of interaction (e.g., don't interrupt); norms of interpretation, which implicate/imply/convey indirectly a community's belief system; also processes of interpretation
G	Genres – e.g., poem, proverb, riddle, prayer, lecture, commercial, editorial, form letter, etc; often coincide with speech events but should be treated as analytically independent of them

Setting refers to the location in which talk and interaction occurs. Herring (2007) does not use this component her amended taxonomy. This omission may stem from the belief that CMD occurs virtually; that is, there is no single physical location or setting in which the discourse is occurring. However, discourse participants could be in the same physical location using portable computing devices such as laptop computers and internet-enabled mobile phones. Alternately, participants in CMD could be using shared computes in public spaces, such as libraries, coffee shops or internet cafés. These types of location can influence the length of participation unit as well as the type of participation: participants in CMD using public computers in internet cafes are frequently not able or willing to participate in certain types of CMD such as chat rooms due to potential restrictions placed on internet access, or to the risk of privacy invasion (unsecure networks, risk of theft of confidential information, etc.).

In his original taxonomy, Hymes (1986) also refers to the 'psychological setting', e.g., 'the cultural definition of an occasion as a certain type of scene' (Hymes 1986: 60). With respect to the safety reports, the psychological setting is extraordinary, which is the primary reason for composing the reports. Because the reports are describing situations which are non-routine and frequently describing events in which the reporter's life or physical safety was threatened, the psychological setting can be seen as emergency-like, critical, and urgent. The forum setting differs from the safety reports in that the discourse is not necessarily related to non-routine inflight events. The forums can best be described as a 'virtual galley', where participants come together using the virtual space of the discussion forums. Forum participants may be in different physical locations but are brought together in the virtual space of the forums (cf. Boellstorff 2008).

Participants – Hymes (1986) uses this component to refer to the speakers or senders, addressors, hearers, or receivers, audience, and addressees of a speech event. With respect to the safety reports, the speakers can be more accurately called the reporters, i.e., flight attendants who compose and submit safety reports. The receivers are the team of analysts at the Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS), discussed above in Section 2.1. Recall that none of the ASRS analysts have worked as flight attendants; therefore flight attendants who submit reports are composing discourse for an audience who do not possess insider knowledge about the job of flight attendant. This lack of insider knowledge can tacitly influence the report discourse: because the analysts have different institutional roles to the flight attendants, there is potential for contextualization cues in the reports to be missed, resulting in miscommunication or misinterpretation (cf. Gumperz 1992a). Moreover it could be that flight attendants attempt to emphasise their safety-related knowledge in the reports because of the institutional roles of the analysts. Flight attendants are below pilots in institutional authority. In addition to these current influences, there is the influence of historical and cultural stereotypes (discussed in Chapters 1 and 3) of flight attendants as less concerned with aviation safety than pilots are (despite evidence to the contrary, cf. Brown 2009; Chute and Weiner 1996, 1995; FSF 1995; Whitelegg 2007). These contextualising factors can potentially influence the report discourse. In the discussion forums, over 95% of participants self-identify as working flight attendants¹⁰. The result is that the participants are, almost without exception, peers. There are few institutionally related power and status differentials amongst forum participants which is different to the safety reports as noted above.

Ends – Hymes (1986) describes this component as the purposes, outcomes, strategies, and goals of discourse (cf. goals of interaction, Herring 2007). The safety reports are ostensibly used for reporting non-routine incidents which occurred before, during, or after flight. When we analyse the data considering the relative power, institutional authority, and hierarchical differentials between flight attendant reporters and ASRS analysts, and the voluntary nature of the reporting scheme, one goal for flight attendant reporters is the demonstration of safety knowledge. The analysis in Chapter 4 addresses this hypothesis further. With respect to the discussion forums, the ostensible purpose is to discuss with fellow flight attendants matters related to the job of flight

¹⁰ There are four other aviation related groups represented amongst active participants in the forums: pilots, gate agents, passengers, and mechanics. There is one self-identified member of each group who is an active participant; the remainder of active participants in the forums self-report as currently working as flight attendants.

attendant. These matters can range from airline-specific policies in which a select group of participants are interested, to factors which apply to all flight attendants (e.g., passenger behaviour; interaction with pilots).

Act sequence – In Hymes (1986), ‘act sequence’ refers to the order of interaction. With respect to the safety reports, an incident report is submitted when at least three factors happen: 1) an inflight incident has occurred; 2) a flight attendant is aware of the ASRS reporting scheme; 3) a flight attendant takes the time to complete and submit a report. The report is then received by the ASRS (via an online reporting form or through the post), analysed by a minimum of two analysts, de-identified, and made public via their online database¹¹. Analysts contact the reporter if the incident requires follow-up or the report requires clarification. If an aviation hazard or threat to aviation safety or security is identified, the analysts alert the appropriate FAA office or aviation authority.

In the discussion forums, a participant chooses to begin a thread by creating a post. They give the thread a title, and post it in an appropriate forum (e.g., a post pertaining to a specific airline will be posted in that airline’s forum; a post pertaining to aviation safety or security but applicable to all forum members is posted in the non-airline specific safety and security forum). A forum moderator has the power to move a thread to a more appropriate forum if the moderator determines that the thread is posted in an inappropriate forum. A moderator can even delete the thread (or individual posts in a thread) if they deem it inappropriate according to certain forum-specific posting guidelines. Once a thread has been started, registered forum members can respond to the original post in the thread with posts of their own. Respondents can choose to ‘quote’ previous posts in their own posts; pictures can be included as well as text in a post. There is no explicit time limit to the ‘life’ of a thread; in theory, a thread can be active and members can post in it indefinitely. However, threads usually become ‘inactive’ after a number of days, or perhaps a few weeks if there is sufficient interest in the thread topic¹². Similarly, the website hosting the forums places no inherent limit to the number of responses in a thread; the only limit to the number of posts in a thread comes from the thread participants themselves. Most threads in my corpus are under thirty posts¹³. Inactive threads are archived on the website, and registered members and unregistered ‘guests’ to the forums can read them. It is also possible for inactive posts to become

¹¹ See ASRS (2012b).

¹² The longest running thread in my corpus was active for six years and nine months.

¹³ The longest thread in my corpus contains 236 posts, which is unusually long.

active again, if a registered forum member chooses to ‘resurrect’ a dormant thread, which rarely happens.

Key – In the Hymes (1986) taxonomy, this category refers to the tone, manner, or spirit in which the discourse is done (e.g., joking, serious, detached; cf. Herring 2007, ‘tone’). Certain keys of discourse are associated with certain speech events or speech acts, for example telling a joke is associated with a more informal tone. The key of the safety reports is ostensibly serious, dictated by the often dangerous and potentially life-threatening events being reported. Some safety reports contain discourse which is not just serious, but is meant to be interpreted as sarcastic or mocking. This difference from expected key is strategic, with the reporters making use of differences in key to highlight or call attention to significant parts of their reports. This point is expanded on in Chapter 4. The key of the discussion forums ranges from serious to joking to argumentative, depending on the thread topic and forum participant who is writing the post. The tone of the forum posts is interpreted by participants according to contextualization cues such as emoticons (i.e., smileys; cf. Dresner and Herring 2010; Herring 2003; see also Chapter 1) and phrases such as ‘just kidding’. These contextualization cues are not always interpreted as the original poster intends them to be, which can lead to miscommunication and conflict between discussion thread participants (cf. Gumperz 1992a, 1982).

Instrumentalities – Hymes (1986) uses this category to refer to the medium of transmission (e.g., oral, written), which in both sets of data is written. The safety reports are textual only, and do not have scope for photos, emoticons, or other non-textual forms of communication which the discussion forums allow. The safety reports can be either hand-written or written using a computer. Once accepted into the ASRS database, original text is converted to a uniform font. The discussion forums are online only; text can vary according to font type, size, and colour.

Norms – Both Hymes (1986) and Herring (2007) include this category which refers to the norms of participation, communication, and interpretation in a speech event. Herring (2007) breaks this category down into three sub-categories: norms of organisation (e.g., administrative protocols); norms of social appropriateness (e.g., behavioural standards in the CMC context); and norms of language (e.g., linguistic conventions specific to a group or users). Situationally appropriate use of these norms is one means of demonstrating communicative competence in a speech event or speech situation (Hymes 1974; cf. Duranti 1997a; Schiffrin 1994; see also Chapter 1). Demonstrating context-appropriate adherence to these norms signifies that a speaker has communicative competence in a speech event.

With respect to the safety reports, there are few explicit norms to which reporters must adhere. These explicit norms include completing both parts of the reporting form; responding to the prompts given on the form to address a reporter's opinion of the cause of incident and what steps can be taken to avoid the incident occurring in the future. A tacit norm in safety reports submitted by flight attendants is deference to and respect for institutional authority. This deference is implicitly communicated and reinforced in literature from airline management and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA; cf. FAA 2004a, 2004b, 2003, 1988; see also Ashcraft 2007; Chute and Weiner 1996; Hochschild 2003; Whitelegg 2007), and is notable when violated in a report. The analysis in Chapter 4 explores these points further.

With respect to the discussion forum discourse, there are explicit norms owing to the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) and numerous posts various forums which discuss the norms and rules for participation. Forum members are expected to have read this information and are rebuked by forum moderators or fellow participants for noncompliance. Most forums do not allow personal attacks (sometimes called flames or flame wars) against other users; the extent of sanctions against a user who flames another user varies with the individual forum moderators. In one of the forums which provided some of the data for the present project, a participant was banned for three months in response to his liberal swearing and referring to another user as 'stupid'.

Genre – In Hymes (1986), this category refers to the type of speech or event (e.g., poem, joke, award acceptance speech). Herring (2007) refers to this category as Activities, and defines it as 'the discursive means of pursuing interactional goals'. With respect to the safety reports, the genre is an institutional report (i.e., report to an institutional body) of a non-routine, potentially life-threatening incident occurring before, during, or after a flight. The genre of the discussion forum discourse is an online discussion forum, which is discussing topics centring on the flight attendant job. The forums are multimodal, incorporating text, pictures, emoticons, and animated images (cf. Androutsopoulos 2006).

2.2.3 Ethnography and insider knowledge

Ethnography is a recognised methodology in linguistic anthropology research which allows for the study of context (e.g., Cotter 2010; Gumperz 1982; Heath 1983; Hymes 1974; Tannen 2005; *inter alia*), and is fundamental to the central analytic frameworks in the present research. Ethnographic fieldwork has greatly contributed to our understanding of cultural and communicative practices and norms (cf. Duranti 1997a). Ethnography is

more than mere description and simply transcribing the words of informants (cf. Hymes 1974). It involves a range of data collection and interpretation methods, ranging from the traditional immersion in a society, participant observation and open-ended questions, to digital methods such as those employed in the present project such as making use of textual means of communication and interaction, and using online databases to enhance and expand knowledge gained from participants themselves (cf. Boellstorff 2008; Kendall 2002; see also much of Susan Herring's early work).

Ethnographic work originated and was intended to be holistic and long-term (cf. Duranti 1997a; Malinowski 1922). This depth and length of study would (theoretically) result in as complete a picture as possible of the interplay between the sociocultural practices, beliefs, and norms of the group of people under investigation. Linguistic adaptation of ethnographic methods has resulted in insights into how language and context influence each other (e.g., Barrett 1999, 1993; Holmes 2006; Jacobs-Huey 2004, 2003; Kiesling 2001a, 2001b; Tannen 2005). Heath (2012, 1983) is a classic example of the benefit of extended linguistic ethnography, having lived among her participants for several years, participating with them in a range of activities in an effort to understand as fully as possible how children gain and demonstrate communicative competence in their respective communities.

Heath (2012, 1983) also demonstrates one of the drawbacks of ethnographic fieldwork methods, namely the time ethnography can take: Heath spent nine years living with her participants, which understandably disadvantages many researchers who do not have this amount of time. I do not mean to imply that research using ethnography should take several years in order to yield 'proper' results. However, it can be argued that the more time that a researcher spends with his or her research participants, the greater knowledge and understanding of communicative norms and practices will result. Yet for many researchers this length of time can be impractical.

Another potential drawback of ethnography is that the researcher must rely on participant informants who may or may not be reliable (Bernard 2006). While this issue can be minimised by including interviews and data from a range of participants, there is always a risk that, unless the researcher has immersed themselves into the group of people they are studying, the researcher is limited in access to the cultural and communicative knowledge which group members themselves possess.

Nonetheless, gaining insider knowledge is invaluable for the researcher to understand contextual motivations and background knowledge to the discourse being analysed, and it happens when one is immersed for prolonged periods of time as a

‘native’ participant (cf. Jacobs-Huey 2002). In my case, I gained insider knowledge during my ten years spent as a working flight attendant although it was not for the purpose of research, as Heath’s time in the field was. During this time I was completely immersed in the flight attendant occupation and its associated practices. Moreover, as a former member of the group I am studying, I have communicative competence in the commercial aviation industry with respect to its activities, functions, and occupational groups. Because I have spent time immersed in the working life of a commercial flight attendant, I can understand what the participants in my research are experiencing, both physically and emotionally, when they, for example, describe inflight incidents or difficult encounters with passengers. It is therefore easier for me, as a former insider, to understand different motivations behind, and hence analyse, the discourse in the data.

For example, when preparing for an emergency landing, there are certain communicative norms and procedures which need to be followed by flight attendants, owing to institutional rules and regulations. There are also certain communicative expectations during these emergency landings. For example, discussing layover plans is both unexpected and inappropriate during preparations for an emergency landing; instead, flight attendants are expected to solely concentrate on specific tasks to prepare for the emergency landing, such as making emergency announcements, preparing the passengers for the landing, and discussing with each other their specific tasks to perform during the landing. Researchers who have not spent time working as flight attendants or with extensive time in the field might not have this type of communicative competence.

Similarly, possessing insider knowledge can help to compensate for the gap between what flight attendants reveal in institutional reports and public forums, and what they reveal to each other, i.e., with other community members. For example, I found comparatively little discussion threads about negative attitudes of male pilots toward gay male flight attendants in the forum data, where discourse can be publicly viewed. However, from personal experience I know that male pilot attitudes toward ‘out’ gay male flight attendants are a frequent topic of conversation among flight attendants, and can have a significant impact on intercrew cohesion and inflight safety. This is an area for future research.

2.2.4 Summary

Introducing context into the analysis of language (i.e., analysing situated language in use), using ethnography of communication and interactional sociolinguistics methodologies, can reveal the influence of numerous contextual factors on flight

attendant discourse. Additionally, incorporating sociocultural and contextual influences into a linguistic analysis allows for a richer, fuller understanding of the relationship between these factors. Understanding components of discourse (discussed in Section 2.2.2) demonstrates the amount of knowledge a speaker must possess in order to be communicatively competent in a given speech event. Moreover, it allows us to understand the influence and impact that extra-linguistic factors have on discourse. In the next chapter, I provide some historical and contextualising information about flight attendant communication and the flight attendant-pilot working relationship.

Chapter 3. Contextualising flight attendant discourse within the aviation industry

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides background about flight attendants, particularly information which is relevant to the thesis. Section 3.1 offers a concise history of the flight attendant profession in the United States, concentrating on aspects relevant to the present project. In Section 3.2 I describe Crew Resource Management (CRM), an aviation industry concept which emphasises open communication, assertive communication strategies, and the operationally necessary hierarchy of the Chain of Command, among other elements. Section 3.3 is a discussion of previous research on flight attendant communication. Section 3.4 discusses three broad categories of separation between the flight attendant and pilot occupations.

3.1 A brief history of flight attendants in the United States

The flight attendant occupation in the United States appeared early in the history of commercial aviation, in the 1920s. The first cabin attendants in the US were male; however, to entice nervous fliers onto aircraft the decision was made to staff the cabin with women who were nurses. The reason for this decision was twofold: staffing the cabin with nurses ensured medical attention could be had in an emergency; additionally, the early commercial airlines wanted to send the message to the public that flying was so safe, even women were not afraid to fly (Barry 2007).

The decision was also made to hire white women to work as cabin attendants, to make a clear distinction between train travel and airplane travel. At the time, train porters were overwhelmingly black and male (Barry 2007; Santino 1986). The early commercial airlines wanted to disassociate themselves with the old way of travelling, and create a strong association between air travel and modernity, technology, and upward mobility (Barry 2007). Thus it was a conscious decision on the part of early airline executives to hire white women. Hiring nurses was a practical decision, due to the new method of air travel that resulted in a plethora of accidents and inflight illnesses. The added benefits of this hiring decision were that the new female cabin attendants were educated, were thought to have socially acceptable personal hygiene, and understood a hierarchical or ‘Chain of Command’ concept, whereby there is a clear and recognised hierarchy with one person or role having ultimate responsibility and institutional authority over others in the command chain. That nurses were also overwhelmingly female was a consequence which would have lasting gendered associations with the job category of flight attendant.

At the same time, the job of pilot was undergoing a process of gendered association. Early pilots in the US were both male and female (Amelia Earhart being the most famous female pilot; cf. Ashcraft 2007; Corn 1979). There was debate about which gender was better suited for piloting, with some arguing that the job of pilot would eventually become ‘woman’s work’ as it was considered by many as an ‘artistic, graceful, and sensitive activity’ (Ashcraft 2007: 17). Not just any women were considered suitable for flying, however: early female pilots conformed to a ‘hyper-feminine’ image of white, wealthy, heterosexual women (Ashcraft 2007: 17). In response to lingering public fear of flying, there was a collaboration between the existing airlines and pilots’ unions to create an occupational image of pilot as a ‘dependable professional’, which, among other things involved constructing the airline pilot as ‘omnipotent, protective fathers’ (Ashcraft 2007: 18).

While this image change for pilots was happening, females in aviation were finding their place in the cabin. This is meant in two ways: that virtually all cabin attendants continued to be female; and the airline/union collusion to create the image of pilot as protective father resulted in creating a gendered aviation institutional norm establishing that women’s place in airplanes is not in the cockpit (Ashcraft 2007; Corn 1979). Thus, for the first several decades of the commercial aviation industry in the US, if a woman wished to work in commercial aviation, she was relegated to the cabin.

This norm was reinforced by employment hiring and firing practices after World War Two. Stewardesses, as they were then known, were expected by both their employers and the general public to be wives in training and model women¹, ‘embodiments of flawless womanhood’ (Barry 2006: 121; cf. Boris 2006; Murphy 2001; Whitelegg 2007)². Indeed, Barry (2007: 51) notes that post-World War Two stewardesses were ‘training for the ultimate female “profession” of homemaking’ whilst working in the ‘bride school’ profession of stewardess.

Because there were far more applicants for available stewardess jobs than positions, airlines could be very selective about whom they hired to represent them (Barry 2006; Boris 2006). Weight requirements are well documented (e.g., Barry 2007; Hochschild 2003; Tyler and Abbott 1998). Airlines and the general public focused mainly

¹ That is, not just look like models but also exemplify the then-archetype of American woman.

² Hochschild (2003:105) cites flight attendant trainees at Delta being urged to ‘think of the passenger as if he were a personal guest in your living room’. (Note the third person male pronoun used to refer to the ostensibly gender neutral ‘passenger’.) While Hochschild’s 2003 edition updates her 1983 text, I can attest to this idealising of passenger-as-guest and aircraft cabin-as-living room in my own flight attendant training.

on the stewardesses' physical appearance and heteronormative beauty, as opposed to their safety role on aircraft. Equally there was a focus on stewardesses' caring and nurturing qualities. United Airlines, for example, were known as the 'friendly skies'. With stewardesses as the main public face of United, it follows that the 'friendly skies' were due to the friendly stewardesses. Likewise, Delta considered itself to be a 'family airline', with stewardesses as the caring, nurturing mothers³ (Barry 2007; Boris 2006; Hochschild 2003).

Before trade union and legislative protection, stewardesses could be sacked for not conforming to airline-dictated and regulated behaviour and body image (Barry 2007). This physical and behavioural control was occurring during a time of commercial airline growth. Although the cost of travel by air was expensive, passenger travel on airlines was increasing yearly after World War Two and airlines expanded their routes to new cities, both domestically in the US and internationally. Thus, more people were being exposed to the physical and behavioural image of airline stewardesses and the concomitant advertising campaigns which promoted stewardesses as ideal hostesses, nurturing caretakers, and surrogate wives.

I suggest these early hiring decisions have resulted in stereotyped images of flight attendants as white women, perhaps ideals of what women are meant to be in western societies. There is a pervasive association between gender and occupation in the inflight professions of commercial aviation: the notion of the pilot as omnipotent, protective father is manifested in myriad popular culture images (e.g., the films *Airport 75*, *Airport 77*, and *Catch Me If You Can*). Likewise, the stereotyped occupational image (cf. Ashcraft 2007) of flight attendant as nurturer and caregiver has been documented and promoted not only in films (e.g., *Airplane!*, *Die Hard 2*, *Executive Decision*, *Red Eye*), but also in popular books (e.g., Marks 2005; McLaughlin 1994; Omelia and Waldock 2003; Stein 2006) and by academics (e.g., Hochschild 2003).

This gender-stereotyped occupational association continued in the late 1960s and into 1970s after stewardesses were granted job protection from earlier sexist hiring and employment practices. Because the fares of US airlines were still regulated by the US government, competition between airlines generally focused on service. For some airlines, this meant a 'sexing up' of stewardess uniforms, and advertising campaigns which talked less about the comfort and safety of passengers, and more about the sexual

³ Delta also played up its 'southern hospitality', portraying their stewardesses as the personification of the perfect southern belle hostess (Whitelegg 2005).

appearance of stewardesses (Barry 2007, 2006). For example, one of the most famous advertising campaigns of the time was National Airlines' 1971 slogan, 'I'm Cheryl, fly me to...' – a (not so) subtle sexual innuendo that stewardesses were on the aircraft for the corporeal pleasure of the mostly male travelling public (Whitelegg 2007).

One consequence of this sexual marketing of stewardesses was sexual harassment, by both (male) pilots and passengers (Barry 2007, 2006; Hochschild 2003; Moles and Friedman 1973; Santino 1986, 1978). Trade unions representing flight attendants began a large-scale campaign in the 1970s to decrease the focus on stewardesses' physical and sexual attributes, and emphasise their safety roles. This campaign began the push to refer to stewards and stewardesses as the gender-neutral *flight attendants*: this change in title reflected both the changing demographic of cabin attendants (thanks to lawsuits and complaints filed against airlines, more men were being hired as flight attendants) and the demand by flight attendants themselves for there to be a focus less on flight attendants' gendered bodies and more on the job they were employed to do (flight attendant trade union campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s highlighted flight attendants' contributions to aviation safety).

Since the 11 September 2001 (i.e., 9/11) terrorist attacks in the US, airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have focused on the role which flight attendants have in maintaining and promoting aviation security. In addition to their safety-related duties, flight attendants have received self-defence training and annual security training which is greatly enhanced compared with pre-9/11 training.

Flight attendants now receive a certification of demonstrated proficiency from the FAA, bringing to the profession an institutionally recognised marker of status and importance. As the FAA bulletin announcing the certification (FAA 2004c) states,

[The US] Congress acknowledged that flight attendants perform vital crewmember functions onboard air carrier aircraft, including emergency functions for aircraft evacuations, firefighting, first aid, and response to security threats. Flight attendants are considered safety-sensitive employees subject to FAA drug and alcohol testing requirements and flight time limitations.

The certification is contingent upon completing federally structured and implemented safety and security training, and came into existence in 2004. The main significance of this certification is that the occupation of flight attendant is, like pilots, now federally recognised, defined, and regulated. One can only be a certified flight attendant upon successful completion of certain criteria. Additionally, the federal certification holds the profession up to a powerful level of institutional scrutiny – both airlines and flight

attendants must adhere to federally specified codes of conduct and regulations. Failure to comply with these rules and regulations can result in being decertified, and as a result, losing one's job as a flight attendant. This is different to the situation before the implementation of federal certification, when persons hired into the job of flight attendant had only to fulfil airline-created criteria, generally to do with physical appearance.

3.2 Flight attendant communicative competence: Crew Resource Management

The concept of Crew Resource Management (CRM) is vital to aviation safety (FAA 2004a; Helmreich et al. 1999; Kanki et al. 2010). CRM is a method of communication, behaviour, and crew interaction which attempts to unite the inflight crew of flight attendants and pilots as one 'team' in order to maximise effective response to inflight emergencies and non-routine incidents. Its tenets emphasise communication techniques which give primacy to information communication (over, for example, concern for politeness or face-saving strategies), soliciting input from all members of an inflight crew, and effective crew coordination.

CRM in the US first appeared in the early 1980s in response to several air crashes in which human factors and communication were found to have played a major role in the accidents (Helmreich et al. 1999). It has gone through several incarnations and now incorporates not only pilots and flight attendants, but also aircraft dispatchers, maintenance personnel and air traffic controllers (FAA 2004a). CRM training focuses on communications processes, decision-making behaviour, and team building and maintenance. CRM training and education is interwoven throughout initial and annual recurrent flight attendant training (FAA 2004a). In an official document regarding the training and implementation of CRM, the FAA lists its essential components, reproduced here in Example 3.1:

Example 3.1

CRM training is one way of addressing the challenge of optimizing the human/machine interface and accompanying interpersonal activities. These activities include team building and maintenance, information transfer, problem solving, decisionmaking, maintaining situation awareness, and dealing with automated systems. ... CRM concentrates on crewmembers' attitudes and behaviors and their impact on safety.⁴ (FAA 2004a: 2, 6; emphasis added)

⁴ Throughout the thesis, underlined text is my emphasis (unless indicated) and highlights discourse relevant to the discussion.

CRM techniques include a range of behavioural and communicative strategies. Below I outline four which are most relevant to the present project: 1) *open communication and team-building*; 2) *hierarchy and captain as the head of the Chain of Command*; 3) *assertiveness*; and 4) *situational awareness*.

3.2.1 Open communication and team-building

The importance of ‘open’ communication between crewmembers is repeatedly stressed in FAA literature (e.g., FAA 2004a, 2004b, 2003, 1988). In Example 3.2, the FAA defines what is meant by open communication:

Example 3.2

...the extent to which crewmembers provide necessary information at the appropriate time (e.g.... alerting others to developing problems). Active participation in the decisionmaking process is encouraged. Decisions are clearly communicated and acknowledged. ... The ‘big picture’ and the game plan are shared within the team, including flight attendants... Crewmembers are encouraged to state their own ideas, opinions, and recommendations. Efforts are made to provide an atmosphere that invites open and free communications. (FAA 2004b: 2, 3; emphasis added)

Thus, a captain who refers to pilots and flight attendants as two separate crews can inadvertently hamper open communication in his or her direct orientation to the separateness of the two crews (cf. Skogstad et al. 1995). Moreover, open communication and team building are mutual concerns. For example, the service duties of flight attendants are much more frequently seen and practiced than their safety and security duties. Consequently, many flight attendants are frustrated when captains dismiss or downplay safety and security information during pre-flight safety briefings, despite the requirement for captains to include this information in their briefings. Thus, the simple act by a captain of acknowledging that flight attendants have both safety and service responsibilities on the aircraft can significantly contribute to the creation of a ‘team’ atmosphere, owing to the fact that flight attendants are framed as not merely responsible for inflight service tasks but also safety and security tasks. This act can in turn lead to increased crew cohesion (cf. Murphy 2001). Ultimately the captain, as head of the Chain of Command, sets the tone of the flight during the pre-flight briefing (Chute and Wiener 1995; FAA 2003). Discursive strategies such as calling flight attendants the ‘eyes and ears’ of pilots work to encourage open communication, as well as increase crew cohesion (cf. Ashcraft 2005).

The importance of open communication and teambuilding to aviation safety is exemplified in a report detailing a plane crash and resulting emergency evacuation (FSF 1995). The airplane was destroyed, and there were 37 fatalities. However, the lead flight attendant (LFA) survived, and recalls the importance of the pre-flight briefing and the tone which was set by the captain, noted in Example 3.3:

Example 3.3

First of all, he emphasized that we are a team. There's no separation between cockpit and the cabin. He emphasized that our problems are his problems, so to speak, that if there's anything that we need never hesitate to come up and speak with him about it, and by him doing that, it kind of set the tone for the [cabin] crew and the cockpit [crew], the entire crew. It started everything positively. I had never flown with him before. By coming out and initiating the briefing and giving his feelings on things, he gave us confidence. It was a starting point as far as our relationship with the captain. It was good. I think he was very professional and was looking out for his crew as well as the passengers. (FSF 1995: 2; emphasis added)

Note that the LFA links a team concept with a positive flight and attitude. In saying that what affects the cabin crew affects the flight crew as well, the captain de-emphasised physical and institutional barriers which can potentially affect crew communication and cohesion (detailed in Section 3.4, below). Equally so, he both implicitly acknowledged and minimised the hierarchical status of pilots above flight attendants (*there's no separation between the cockpit and the cabin; our problems are his problems*). Note also that the LFA highlights the importance of the captain initiating the briefing, which can also be viewed as initiation introductions of the crew. The importance of introductions and greetings to crew cohesion is stressed by academics (Brown 2009; Cardosi and Huntley, Jr. 1988; Chute and Wiener 1996, 1995, 1994) and the US government (FAA 2004a, 1988) (see also Section 3.3, below).

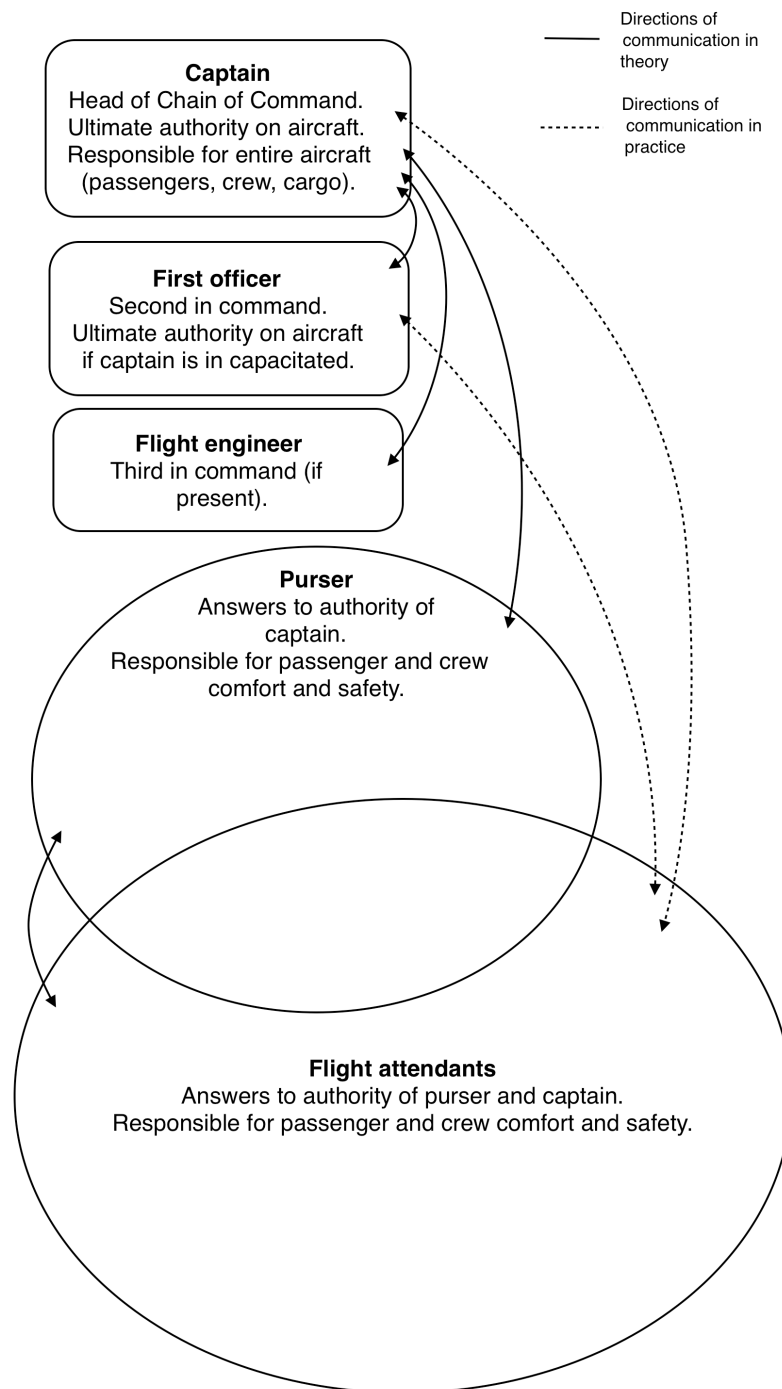
3.2.2 Hierarchy and captain as head of the Chain of Command

The Chain of Command is a hierarchical concept which places the captain at the top (i.e., head), giving him or her responsibility and institutional authority over the aircraft, passengers, and crew. The first officer (sometimes referred to as the 'co-pilot') is the second in command, and if there is a flight engineer, he or she is third in the Chain of Command. Below pilots is the position of Lead Flight Attendant (LFA), which is the role responsible for coordinating communication between the captain and cabin crew, among other duties. The position of LFA has the most institutional authority of all flight attendant positions. Note that flight attendants come below pilots in the Chain of

Command, and thus have less inflight institutional authority, power, and responsibility than pilots have, by virtue of the structure of the Chain of Command. Note also that pilots ostensibly have institutional authority and power over activities in the aircraft cabin, despite their lack of training in cabin-related tasks.

Figure 3.1 on page 63 portrays the Chain of Command in visual representation. Size of shape relates to relative numbers; there are fewer pilots than flight attendants both employed in commercial airlines and staffed on individual aircraft. Purser and flight attendant circles overlap to represent that the role of purser is not a discrete role but instead an *ad hoc* position which flight attendants select (or ‘bid for’) once they arrive at the aircraft to begin their work day. In contrast, first officers do not swap roles with captains; the positions of captain, first officer, and flight engineer are separate positions and not interchangeable. Arrows refer to directions and lines of communication, and are intended to demonstrate the subtle differences between communicative expectations and norms emphasised in institutional and occupational training, and the practical realities of work life. Pilots interact and freely communicate with each other working in the flight deck. Similarly, flight attendants and the purser (or lead flight attendant) interact and communicate whilst working in the cabin. According to institutional and occupational training, however, the purser position is assigned the responsibility of mediating between pilots and the rest of the cabin crew with respect to communication and relaying information. In reality, however, it is common for flight attendants to bypass the purser and speak directly to pilots, for example, to request an adjustment in cabin temperature or inform pilots of turbulence (turbulence can be felt relatively more in the aft portion of certain aircraft than in the front).

Figure 3.1 Chain of Command



CRM training which flight attendants undergo stresses the ‘authority of the pilot in command’ (FAA 2004a: 15; see also FAR 91.3; FAR 121.533). As head of the Chain of Command, the captain is responsible for holding briefings with cabin crew (FAA

2004a, 2003). The captain is also responsible for such tasks as taxiing the aircraft and contacting the airline in case of, for example, a mechanical problem or flight delay.

Emphasising the institutional authority of the captain can be at odds with the CRM concept of *team building* as pilots and flight attendants bring their own set of values, beliefs, and prejudices with them to work. In asking both parties to follow the CRM concept of teambuilding and the CRM concept of the captain as head of Chain of Command, this demands them to put aside, for example, personally held gender or racial stereotypes and prejudices. Moreover, it places a greater demand on the captain, who must manage his or her position of institutional authority with the CRM requirement of building an inflight ‘team’; that is, downplaying his or her authoritative position but at the same time being the ‘team leader’. I suggest that working to meet these competing demands is a delicate balance, and one which can be at times difficult to manage. In Example 3.3, the captain was able to manage this balance successfully, as the LFA’s evaluation shows (*he emphasized that we are a team... It started everything positively... It was good.*). The captain was able to both assert his authority as head of the Chain of Command (*coming out and initiating the briefing*) as well as create a cohesive ‘team’ attitude (*our problems are his problem*). This captain epitomised CRM and the aviation industry goal of crew cohesion. This argument is pursued in Chapter 4.

3.2.3 Assertiveness

CRM was developed in the 1980s in response to accidents in which it was determined that human factors played a significant role. First-generation CRM training was intended to counteract a documented lack of ‘assertiveness’ by junior crewmembers toward captains who sometimes displayed an autocratic type of communication and interaction (Helmreich et al. 1999). As CRM developed to include flight attendants, this stressing of assertiveness grew to emphasise the importance of ‘training in the potential benefits of crewmembers advocating the course of action that they feel is best, even though it may involve conflict with others’ (FAA 2004a: 10; emphasis added). Discourse reflecting a CRM-assertive attitude includes encouraging questions which are answered openly and nondefensively; encouraging crewmembers to question the actions and decisions of others; and crewmembers speaking up persistently to state their information and concerns until there is a clear resolution (FAA 2004b: 2).

Note the phrase *they feel*, above: flight attendants are trained to speak up if they have concerns with another crewmember’s behaviour, using such language as ‘I feel...’ or ‘I don’t feel...’, e.g., ‘I don’t feel comfortable with this situation’. Flight attendants are

taught that this particular wording is the most appropriate means to assertively express their concerns with, for example, the captain. This also works to save face in that it is not a bald accusation toward a superior (i.e., the captain) of a perceived misdeed (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Merritt 1995).

3.2.4 Situational awareness

The aviation industry concept of *situational awareness* is tied to safety. Flight attendants are trained to be situationally aware; that is, to pay attention to sights, smells, and sounds which could be indications of, for example, a mechanical problem or an onboard emergency. As such, many captains in their briefings with flight attendants call the cabin crew the eyes and ears of the flight deck (cf. Ashcraft 2005), particularly since new flight deck security procedures were implemented as a result of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A main consequence of these procedures is that pilots do not leave the flight deck during any phase of flight for any reason other than biological, leaving flight attendants on their own to handle mechanical or passenger-related emergencies.

Thus flight attendants have a responsibility to not only be aware of potential danger, but to report unusual situations to the pilots. Reporting unusual situations which may or may not lead to inflight emergencies is contingent on the open communication and cooperative tone set by the captain during the pre-flight briefing, as well as the communicative skills of the flight attendant. For example, if during the briefing the cabin crew somehow feel slighted by the pilots or are made to feel that the flight crew consider them only as service workers, there is little incentive for a flight attendant to contact the pilots with a safety concern, lest he or she expect a rebuke by the pilots for wasting their time on a trivial matter. Similarly, if a flight attendant is unfamiliar with technical terms or specific names of aircraft parts, or with smells, sights, and sounds that are expected and common during a flight, the flight attendant may not feel comfortable or confident in contacting pilots with their concerns (cf. Chute and Wiener 1996, 1995).

3.3 Flight attendant/pilot research

This section discusses previous research which concerns flight attendant interaction with pilots. While the present project is concerned with community and identity as they relate to flight attendants, it would be an incomplete analysis to look at only flight attendants abstracted from their daily work lives which includes working with pilots. While flight attendants and pilots work in separate parts of the aircraft (see section 3.4), they nevertheless regularly interact, and I suggest in subsequent chapters that their interactions

and participant relationships can be used as a resource for both flight attendant identity and community construction. Section 3.3.1 discusses research on ‘good’ communication between flight attendants and pilots. Section 3.3.2 discusses the concept of greetings and (positive and negative) politeness between flight attendants and pilots. Section 3.3.3 discusses pre-flight briefings between the captain and pilots and flight attendants.

3.3.1 ‘Good’ communication

The importance of ‘good’ flight attendant/pilot communication to aviation safety and security has been emphasised in studies published by government aviation safety regulatory bodies (e.g., FAA 1988; FSF 2003) and academics (e.g., Brown 2009; Chute and Wiener 1996; Clark 2007). ‘Good’ communication presupposes open communication, discussed in Section 3.2 above, and can be defined as communication which achieves the desired effect or goal and in which miscommunication does not occur. Good communication and open communication differ: open communication implies that there is no impediment toward potential communication; communication that is good requires that actual communication is made and desired participant-communicative goals are achieved.

Cardosi and Huntley, Jr. (1988) repeatedly stress the importance of knowledge and awareness of each other’s duties to good flight attendant/pilot communication and coordination. In their recommendations to the FAA, they write that it is ‘clear that the key to improving cockpit and cabin crew coordination lies in improving the communication between the two crews and in increasing each crew’s awareness of the other crew’s duties and concerns’ (1988: 29). FAA (1988) is the official advisory circular which resulted from Cardosi and Huntley, Jr. (1988), and includes all of their recommendations⁵. Most have since been implemented; however, there still remains a call for improved cabin/flight crew communication, as reflected in a recent report to a US House of Representatives committee (GAO 2003). This large-scale document on improving cabin occupants’ safety and health states ‘improving flight and cabin crew communication holds promise for ensuring the evacuation of passengers during an emergency’ (GAO 2003: 89; emphasis added).

An example of good flight attendant-to-pilot communication is the immediate communication upon discovery of an abnormal situation on an aircraft (such as a

⁵ Despite its 1988 publication date, this document remains the current US government stance on flight attendant/pilot communication. GAO (2003: 89) notes that the FAA plans to update this advisory circular, though does not give an estimated date of publication.

suspected fire in the cabin) by flight attendants to pilots with no hesitation, communicating all relevant facts and information about the situation (e.g., location of fire, presence of flames, type of smoke). Similarly, an example of good pilot-to-flight attendant communication is the immediate communication from flight deck to cabin crew upon pilots' receipt of knowledge of a situation which can potentially interfere with safe cabin operations, for example forecasted turbulence.

In addition to the FAA, the aviation industry has also noted the importance of good flight attendant/pilot communication to aviation safety, often by inverting the discussion and citing the consequences of 'poor' communication. For example, JAL (1990: 2) argues that four minutes were 'wasted' during an inflight emergency between the reporting by flight attendants of an onboard fire to the captain and the subsequent beginning of emergency landing procedures. The cabin crew did not communicate crucial details about the fire to the pilots. As a result, the captain chose to continue flying instead of landing at a closer airport; there were twenty-three fatalities. Similarly, FSF (2003) details flight attendant/pilot communication problems in an emergency evacuation of a Boeing 747. The airplane interphone systems failed during the emergency, and neither cabin nor flight crew were trained in alternate emergency communications procedures. Additionally, cabin crew never passed on to flight crew information which was later revealed to be critical to the decision to evacuate the aircraft.

Notably absent in the literature are academic studies about flight attendant communication. Although the present project does not explicitly address communication between working flight attendants in the aircraft or other work-related settings, this is an area with great potential for future research as I detail in the last chapter.

3.3.2 Greetings and politeness

A second theme in previous research on flight attendant/pilot interaction is the importance of greetings and introductions between flight attendants and pilots. Cardosi and Huntley, Jr. (1988: 31) stress that 'respectful introductions and displays of common courtesy can help to enhance the working relationship between the two crews and foster an atmosphere that is conducive to good communication'. The FAA reiterates this point of politeness and crew cohesion in Example 3.4:

Example 3.4

There are many simple practices that can help to enhance the working relationship between flight attendants and flight crewmembers and which may be used to foster an atmosphere that is conducive to good communication. These practices include:

respectful introductions, displays of common courtesy, announcements from the flight deck during delays to keep flight attendants and passengers informed, and the captain being supportive of flight attendants when problems arise in the cabin (e.g., a disorderly passenger). (FAA 1988: 5; emphasis added)

Chute and Wiener (1996, 1995, 1994) and Brown (2009) have also stressed the importance of greetings amongst crewmembers, especially to flight attendants. Chute and Wiener (1995) point out that for flight attendants, the matter of pilots introducing themselves is much more than a trivial courtesy. They argue that introductions are important for establishing rapport between the two crews, something which works toward the CRM value of team building. Moreover, Chute and Wiener (1996) cite the single largest desire of flight attendants responding to their survey was for pilots, particularly captains, to introduce themselves upon boarding the aircraft. In her more recent research, which follows Chute and Wiener (1996, 1995, 1994), Brown (2009) demonstrates the same desire of flight attendants for pilots to introduce themselves.

The importance of greetings and introductions have been emphasised by several researchers (e.g., Duranti 1997b, 1997c, 1992; Goffman 1967). Firth (1972: 1, quoted in Duranti 1992: 658) writes that greetings are ‘the recognition of an encounter with another person as socially acceptable’. Indeed, responses to Chute and Wiener’s (1995) survey equate pilots introducing themselves to showing respect to flight attendants. For flight attendants, the matter of pilots introducing themselves is more than an act of positive or negative politeness (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987; Mills 2003); it is expected behaviour which contributes to a cohesive inflight team, which works to implicitly mitigate the hierarchical differences between pilots and flight attendants (cf. Brown 2009; Section 3.4 below) that can negatively impact intercrew communication and cohesion when absent (Chute and Wiener 1995).

3.3.3 Pre-flight briefings

A third theme is the importance to crew cohesion of pilot/flight attendant briefings, particularly briefings which are succinct, non-patronising, and inclusive of all inflight crewmembers. Pre-flight briefings are an integral part of CRM (FAA 2004a, 2004b), and are to take place at the minimum between the captain and the lead flight attendant; ideally all crew attend the briefing. Cardosi and Huntley, Jr. (1988: 31) assert that ‘the single most important practice for setting the stage for good cockpit and cabin crew coordination on any flight is the cockpit/cabin (or captain/flight attendant) pre-flight briefing’. FAA (1988: 5; emphasis added) provides a virtual echo of this sentiment, in Example 3.5:

Example 3.5

Perhaps the single most important procedure for setting the stage for good coordination between flight crewmembers and flight attendants on any flight is the flight deck/cabin (or captain/flight attendant) preflight briefing.

FAA (2003: 2; emphasis added) also states the close relation between team building and pre-flight briefings between the flight and cabin crew in Example 3.6:

Example 3.6

The purpose of the [pilot/]flight attendant briefing is to develop a team concept between the flight deck and cabin crew. An ideal developed team must share knowledge relating to flight operations, review individual responsibilities, share personal concerns, and have a clear understanding of expectations.

While the briefing has a set act sequence (Hymes 1986; cf. Cotter and Cotter 1997) and is in place for operational reasons (e.g., information exchange), an equally important function is to set the tone or discourse context for the rest of the flight (FAA 2004a, 2003; cf. Hymes 1986). JAL (1990: 4) states that flight attendant/pilot briefings are ‘the time at which confirmation is made of the established ways in which they will work together to promote the safety and security of the flight and passengers’. Chute and Wiener (1994) expand on this and are explicit in highlighting the impact a briefing can have on crew communication and interaction:

A briefing can establish expectations, set the tone for crew interactions, address particular problems or requirements for a flight and serve as a refresher for emergency and security procedures. At the very least, an introduction can set the tone and open communication for ongoing requests and clarifications. (Chute and Wiener 1994: 4; emphasis added)

A briefing which establishes the captain as open and receptive to criticism, involves flight attendants in decision-making, and downplays the pilot’s position above flight attendants in the Chain of Command can be viewed as a ‘good’ briefing and as setting the tone for a successful flight, in which both flight and cabin crew feel that there are few impediments to open communication (cf. Merritt 1995).

In addition to setting the tone (cf. Hymes 1986), briefings also are a significant contributing factor to crew cohesion. Skogstad et al. (1995: 846) state

During briefings, captains creating highly effective teams work to establish relevant team boundaries as well as always talking of ‘we’ in terms of the total aircrew, in

contrast to some of the captains in the low-effective teams who referred to the [flight deck] as ‘we’ and [cabin crew] as ‘you’.

Recall Example 3.3, above. In the surviving flight attendant’s narrative, he explicitly calls attention to the importance of the captain-initiated briefing (*It was a starting point as far as our relationship with the captain. It was good.*). He also equated the tone set by the captain during the briefing as having a significant influence on the crew’s confidence and attitude during the rest of their time together (*By coming out and initiating the briefing and giving his feelings on things, he gave us confidence*). Thus, briefing discourse which overtly orients to the division of the two crews is seen to be a factor in the effectiveness of the inflight crew. Moreover, briefings can be seen as extended introductions (Chute and Wiener 1994; Murphy 2001).

3.4 Divisions between flight attendants and pilots

This section discusses three different ways in which flight attendants and pilots are separated in the commercial aviation industry: *physical* separation; *institutional* separation; and *hierarchical* separation. These different separations are a pervasive feature of the occupation of flight attendant; that is, flight attendants constantly and continuously experience these divisions throughout their time of employment. The significance of these separations to crew unity cannot be underestimated: flight attendants and pilots are required by law to work as one unified team whilst at the same time are separated in almost every conceivable way in their occupations and in the commercial aviation industry. This issue is discussed throughout the remainder of the thesis.

3.4.1 Physical separation

While flight attendants and pilots work in the same mobile space (i.e., the aircraft), they are separated into discrete work groups. This separation is constructed in several ways. Firstly, they are separated *physically*. Pilots work in the flight deck (or cockpit, to use the lay term); flight attendants in the cabin (cf. Chute and Wiener 1994, 1995; Edwards 1992). At various times they may be in the same physical space during a flight; however these episodes are brief and are usually task-related, for example, delivering service items, or relieving pilots for toilet breaks. Security practices implemented after the 9/11 attacks in the US have resulted in a number of changes to security procedures, including increasing the security procedures for gaining entry into the flight deck. This increase in flight deck security has had the unintended effect of decreasing the frequency with which flight attendants and pilots have spent time together to socialise or casually interact

during down time on a flight. For example, before 9/11, flight attendants used to be able to access the flight deck with ease, and would occasionally spend downtime during flights in the flight deck, conversing with pilots. This time together had the added benefit of building crew solidarity and unity.

3.4.2 Institutional separation

Secondly, flight attendants and pilots are separated *institutionally*. Flight attendants and pilots are employed in different departments in an airline: flight attendants in Inflight Services and pilots in Flight Operations (Chute and Wiener 1995; Edwards 1992). This division holds true across all major US commercial airlines.⁶ The significance of this departmental separation is that it contradicts the messages conveyed in the training that flight attendants undergo. The majority of training that flight attendants receive, both initially and annually, is related to safety and security situations, with only between 5 and 10 percent of training time devoted to service duties. However, flight attendants rarely put this safety-related training and skill set into practice. At the same time, a significant portion of flight attendant duty time is taken up with service tasks, e.g., beverage and meal services. Thus, flight attendants rarely carry out the tasks for which they receive the most training. Conversely, pilots are hired to and routinely carry out the tasks they are specifically trained for: flying the aircraft.

Institutional separation carries over into the respective trade unions representing pilots and flight attendants. Early flight attendant unions were branches or affiliates of pilot unions (Barry 2007), but 1960 saw the separation of the Air Line Stewards and Stewardesses Association (ALSSA) from its parent union, the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA, which still represents the majority of US pilots). ALPA was and remains a strong and powerful union, both in terms of number of members and in financial terms. Commercial pilots in the US earn significantly more money than US commercial flight attendants⁷. Given that monthly union dues are a percentage of flight attendants' and pilots' salaries⁸, ALPA income is significantly more than the largest US flight attendant

⁶ On the recruitment web pages for various US airlines, what is striking is the difference in language used to describe both the position and the tasks required for each job. Pages seeking pilots emphasise the skill and safety training required for applicants; for flight attendants, experience working with the public in service positions is desired. This is an area for future research.

⁷ The most recent statistics (May 2011) show that US flight attendants' mean annual wage is US\$41,720; the mean annual wage for airline pilots, co-pilots and flight engineers is US\$118,070 (BLS 2012).

⁸ For example, monthly dues for the trade union which represented flight attendants at my former employer were one hour's wage; thus my union dues at the time I left were approximately US\$40 per month.

union, the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA). This disparity in trade union income parallels the disparity in income on an individual employee level. What this translates to is that ALPA has more financial weight than AFA, can pay for more political lobbyists, and has the financial leverage to bargain with airlines on a level with which AFA and other flight attendant trade unions cannot match.

This difference in trade unions is reflected in the different labour contracts which flight attendant and pilot trade unions bargain and secure. Flight attendant and pilot jobs are regulated by and subject to and restricted not only Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs; see below) but also by contractual limits. These contractual differences in benefits and work rules are put into practice every day on the job, visible to both labour groups.⁹

Institutional separation of flight attendants and pilots is also evident in the different Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs)¹⁰ which are in place and enforced by the FAA. For example, pilot duty time is limited to eight hours between required rest periods (FAR 121.471; ALPA 2004); flight attendants can work up to 20 hours without a scheduled break period (FAR 121.467).

3.4.3 Hierarchical separation

Finally, flight attendants and pilots are separated *hierarchically*. Section 3.2.2, above, discussed the aviation hierarchical concept of the Chain of Command. While in theory flight attendants are under the captain's authority, in practice, flight attendants and pilots work independently of one another on the aircraft. That is, pilots work in their 'office' (as many flight attendants refer to the flight deck) and flight attendants work in the cabin without the influence or direction of the captain. This operational situation is so ubiquitous that it is only when a captain attempts to influence cabin operations that one realises how taken for granted this independence is.¹¹

This brings us to a related difference, and perhaps a cultural separation, between the two employee groups. In the US, many pilots earn their commercial pilot licenses by military service (e.g., the US Air Force). This background and training necessarily

⁹ One example from my experience is the difference in availability to Crew Scheduling. Pilots were not to be contacted by Crew Scheduling during their rest time; if they were contacted, then their rest time begins from zero. However, flight attendants could be contacted by Crew Scheduling at any time during their rest period.

¹⁰ Available at FAA (2012d)

¹¹ For example, during a break between flights, I was told by the captain on one of my flights to clean the walls of a lavatory. Ostensibly it was within his authority to make that order; in actuality there were cleaners employed for such tasks.

exposes them to a Chain of Command, although I would suggest a military Chain of Command is quite different than that at an airline (cf. Halbe 2011). Nonetheless, due to this military background, when pilots are hired by an airline, they are already indoctrinated into a hierarchical structure similar to the commercial aviation Chain of Command. Conversely, many flight attendants do not have the same level of familiarity with working in a Chain of Command hierarchy. Although I have been unable to locate statistics to support this assertion, I suggest that this military background is not shared to the same extent by flight attendants. Anecdotally in my 10 years as a flight attendant, working with several hundred different flight attendants, I came across fewer than 25 (male and female) flight attendants who had a military background.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has provided a brief summary about the history and occupational practices of the flight attendant profession in the United States. The data and analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 expand on the themes presented in this chapter.

Section 3.2 discussed the concept and four strategies of Crew Resource Management (CRM). Because of its importance and ubiquity, CRM outlines what constitutes a type of communicative competence in commercial aviation (cf. Hymes 1974). I would like to highlight that the strategies of CRM are interconnected: *open communication* depends on a ‘good’ briefing, in which the captain employs an *assertive*, not aggressive communication technique, and works to establish an inflight ‘team’ of flight attendants and pilots working together (instead of emphasising the separation between the two groups). The *captain, as head of the Chain of Command*, sets the tone of the flight through his or her manner of communication; thus, an aggressive or authoritarian tone in the briefing might hamper open communication. Flight attendants maintain *situational awareness* continuously, and are encouraged to contact the captain if they notice anything unusual or out of the ordinary, being *assertive* if necessary, for example should the pilots not answer the interphone immediately or should the pilots disregard or not take seriously the information flight attendants are passing on.

Section 3.3 was intended to familiarise readers with some of the existing research on flight attendant/pilot communication, and with expectations flight attendants have when communicating with pilots and other flight attendants during work. These expectations include open communication which provides a platform for good communication; introductions from pilots; and efficient, inclusive, and thorough pre-flight briefings between captains and the rest of the inflight crew. Because of the ubiquity

of these expectations, I argue that they serve as resources for the construction of both identity and community, as I will show in later chapters.

Chapter 4. Safety reports and the construction of identity

4.0 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of a selection of safety reports submitted to a US government body, discussed in Chapter 2. In the analyses, I apply Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) framework of identity construction to the data, identifying occupational and institutional practices which are described in the reports and thus salient in the construction of a situated identity. The chapter is organised according to themes which emerged as relevant or recurrent in the data, particularly those oriented primarily to safety-related tasks and expectations. (Flight attendants have dual responsibilities of safety and service tasks.) In Section 4.1, I discuss how flight attendant safety knowledge is made salient in reports. Section 4.2 discusses how the reports use passenger demands and concerns strategically, to enhance flight attendants' own assertions about safety. Section 4.3 looks at flight attendant/pilot interaction and communication as constructed in the reports. Section 4.4 addresses use of institutional authorities and Section 4.5 analyses the use of the phrase *we landed without incident* and argues for motivations and interpretations of the use of the phrase and its derivatives. Section 4.6, drawing on these analyses, delineates the construction of a situated safety-focused identity which stems in part from ideologies which are salient and pervasive in commercial aviation.

4.1 Safety knowledge

As detailed in Chapter 3, the majority of training which flight attendants (FAs) receive is concerned with safety, including coordinated behaviour during an emergency landing, operating aircraft doors during an emergency, training to deal with inflight medical emergencies, and survival techniques during a ditching, or emergency landing in water. Virtually all flight attendant training involves safety and security knowledge and awareness. This safety awareness is reiterated and reinforced every year when flight attendants take part in annual recurrent training. Thus, FAs are implicitly trained to consider themselves safety professionals (see also Chapter 5). Here and throughout the thesis, I define 'professional' as primarily concerned with the profession of flight attendant and its attendant needs, expectations, values, tasks, and norms. Thus a 'professional' flight attendant is one who orients to security, safety, and service; to Crew Resource Management tenets such as the Chain of Command hierarchy and the concept of an inflight 'team' of crewmembers (discussed in Chapter 3); to occupational expectations related to uniforms, luggage, the flight attendant manual, inflight

behavioural expectations and norms; and to the existence and role of institutional authorities such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in commercial aviation.

Of the themes which are salient in the corpus of reports, perhaps the most important is safety knowledge, defined here as an understanding and awareness of the safety information and tasks which FAs are required to know, and which are critical and important to aviation and in-flight safety of passengers and crew. This section addresses two methods of displaying flight attendant safety knowledge: hypothetical safety situations (i.e., ‘what if’ scenarios), and aircraft door responsibilities.

4.1.1 Hypothetical safety situations: What if?

One way safety knowledge is displayed in the reports is by using conditional, ‘what if?’ type of talk: what if a situation had happened? What would be the consequences, and how would these consequences affect or involve flight attendants? Using language which discusses potential (instead of real) safety-related situations demonstrates the safety practice of situational awareness, something which is repeatedly emphasised in Crew Resource Management (CRM; see Chapter 3) training. Moreover, constructing such hypothetical ‘what if’ scenarios displays flight attendants’ awareness of the range of potential emergencies, and how easily or quickly they could occur. Eighteen reports in my corpus (12%) contain this type of ‘what if’ hypothetical scenarios, which are discursive evidence that flight attendants (FAs) are thinking of aircraft, cabin, and aviation safety.

Example 4.1 demonstrates this ‘what if’ type of thinking in a report documenting a frozen aircraft door:

Example 4.1

816000 (2008-12)

1. UPON LNDG FOR NON FLAPS EMER ARR.
2. WHEN TAXIED INTO PARKING SPOT AND PARKED, COULD NOT OPEN THE REAR DOOR FOR DEPLANING.
3. I COULD NOT HAVE OPENED THE REAR DOOR **IF THERE HAD BEEN AN ACTUAL EMER SITUATION.**
4. CAPT HAD TO USE FORCE TO GET DOOR OPEN.
5. DOOR FROZEN CLOSED.
6. DEADHEADING FLT CREW MEMBER COULD NOT OPEN EITHER.
7. BOTH REAR DOORS WERE FROZEN SHUT.
8. ONCE EVERYONE DEPLANED, CAPT CAME BACK AND FINALLY GOT THEM OPENED.
9. GET HEATED DOOR SEALS.

10. DE-ICE DOORS BEFORE DEP.¹

The FA reporter in Example 4.1 claims that if there had been an actual emergency (Line 3) as opposed to the routine operation of opening the rear doors for a standard passenger deplaning, they would not have been able to open the doors as they had frozen shut (Line 5). By introducing the hypothetical emergency scenario, the FA reporter is displaying their knowledge of aviation safety and the consequences that might have resulted. The FA reporter does not have to introduce this ‘what if’ scenario, and could just as easily have submitted the report without it. But instead the FA reporter emphasises the importance of having operable doors and doors which do not freeze shut (Lines 4-8) by suggesting the possibility of an emergency evacuation in which a main exit is inoperable.

Example 4.2 highlights this ‘what if’ type of discourse further. Here, the flight attendant is submitting a report not based on an incident that has occurred, but on the *potential* for an incident to occur.

Example 4.2

812521 (2008-11)

1. I'D LIKE TO **BRING TO YOUR ATTN A SAFETY CONCERN** THAT I HAVE NOTICED ON THE B757 WHERE THE SAFETY BARRIER-GATE IS INSTALLED.
2. MY ACR USES DOOR L1 FOR BOARDING AND DEPLANING AT MOST GATES.
3. I HAVE NOTICED THAT WHILE BOARDING, PEOPLE GET STUCK ON THE GATE WHICH IS NOT POSSIBLE TO LOCK IN PLACE FIRMLY.
4. (IT HAS A LATCH AT THE TOP BUT THE BOTTOM CAN BE EASILY PULLED OUT IF CAUGHT ON SOMETHING AND THEN THE WHOLE GATE CAN COME UNDONE).
5. ROLL ABOARDS, FEET, COATS, ARMS, ETC, ALL SEEM TO CATCH ON THE GATE ON EVERY FLT.
6. I CAN ONLY SPEAK FOR WHAT I SEE ON THE B757 ACFT WHICH IS THE ACFT WE MOSTLY USE OUT OF THESE ARPTS.
7. I SINCERELY BELIEVE THAT **IN AN EVAC THE GATE WOULD BECOME A SERIOUS OBSTACLE** AND FOR THIS REASON I AM RPTING IT.

In this report, the flight attendant calls attention to a boarding gate which has a loose safety lock (Line 3). While the FA reporter does not specifically say so, it is assumed that they have not actually witnessed damage to humans or property. However, they report on the *potential* for damage or injury (Lines 1 and 7), which demonstrates their knowledge and experience in safety-related matters and in settings which actually can cause injury or damage, and their ability to recognise a potentially hazardous setting. Recall that submitting reports is voluntary; thus, there is no expectation or responsibility for the

¹ Throughout the thesis, underlined and/or bold text is my emphasis (unless indicated) and highlights discourse relevant to the discussion.

flight attendant to report this safety barrier, which for this reporter is *a safety concern* (Line 1). However, in submitting this report, the FA reporter highlights specifically why they believe the safety barrier is a potential hazard (Lines 3-6), underscoring both their safety knowledge and awareness of potential hazards (Line 7).

In Example 4.3, the FA reporter is highlighting the fact that emergency evacuation slides in aircraft doors are not routinely checked to ensure they are pressurised:

Example 4.3

662725 (2005-05)

1. THE DOOR PRESSURE GAUGES AT DOORS 1R AND 2R WERE BELOW MINIMUMS.
2. 1R WAS AT 750 PSI AND DOOR 2R WAS AT 1100 PSI.
3. THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN AT 1750 PSI OR SO.
4. THE DOOR PRESSURE GAUGES ARE **NOT A FLT ATTENDANT PREFLT CHK.**
5. I CHK BECAUSE THIS IS HAPPENING OFTEN.
6. I CALLED FOR A MECHANIC AND ASKED IF THEY CHK THEM AND THEY SAID NO.
7. WHO DOES AND WHEN?
8. THIS IS VERY ALARMING TO ME.
9. **IF THERE WAS AN EMER,** WE WOULD HAVE HAD TO REDIRECT ON THE R SIDE FORWARD AND AFT.
10. COULD HAVE BEEN CRUCIAL TIME WASTED.

Example 4.3 shows yet another dimension of FA safety awareness. The FA reporter demonstrates not just their awareness of door slide pressurisation gauges and bottles, but also that they are going beyond the required pre-flight safety checks to verify that evacuation slides are ready to use in an emergency. The FA reporter notes that it is neither a flight attendant pre-flight safety check, nor a routine maintenance check, and displays a concern for a hypothetical safety-centred situation: *if there was an emergency, we would have had to redirect passengers* (Line 9), which *could have been crucial time wasted* (Line 10) in the (hypothetical) evacuation.

4.1.2 Door responsibilities

The passenger cabin door is an integral part of the aircraft: it is the primary means of entrance and exit and one of the most important areas for which flight attendants are responsible. When passengers board the aircraft, flight attendants stand in strategic positions in the cabin. There is always at least one cabin crewmember standing at the door through which passengers enter the plane (called the ‘boarding door’). When the aircraft is ready to push back from the gate, flight attendants ‘arm’ the doors for which

they have (emergency exit) responsibility (when armed, the emergency exit slide deploys by inflating; when disarmed, doors open without slide deployment).

Due to the expense of replacing an inflated slide (both monetary cost of the new slide and time out of active commercial service), flight attendants who inadvertently cause a slide to inflate ('blow a slide') can be disciplined by airline management. Moreover, door operation knowledge is a central tenet of flight attendant safety duty proficiency testing; in order to initially qualify as a flight attendant, a candidate must demonstrate knowledge of door operation for each aircraft operated by the prospective airline employer. Door proficiency is tested annually; inability to demonstrate approved knowledge of door operation results in removal from active duty until proficiency can be sufficiently demonstrated. Thus, it is in the flight attendant's best interest to operate aircraft doors in their appropriate manner, including arming and disarming doors when required.

Thirteen reports in the corpus (approximately 10%) report incidents involving aircraft doors. Example 4.4 demonstrates how passionately flight attendants feel about attending to their door arming and disarming duties through the description of how she or he failed to disarm a door upon arrival at the airport gate:

Example 4.4

673692 (2005-08)

1. I FAILED TO DISARM DOOR 1R ON A B737.
2. SOMEONE COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED OR MAIMED FOR LIFE.
3. **THIS THOUGHT IS SO DEVASTATING TO ME.**
4. FORTUNATELY, THE PURSER FOUND THE DOOR ARMED AND DISARMED IT.
5. I TRULY THANK HIM FOR HIS GREAT WORK.
6. THESE B737'S HAVE NO ARMED INDICATOR ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE ACFT NOR IN THE COCKPIT.
7. THEY ARE VERY DANGEROUS TO ANYONE TRYING TO ENTER THE ACFT FROM THE OUTSIDE.
8. EVERYONE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO DISARM, CRACK, AND XCHK.
9. AND SWEEPING IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT.
10. ALTHOUGH I WOULD NOT WANT ANYONE TO BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR MY ACTIONS, I DO KNOW THAT, HAD THE SLIDE DEPLOYED AND SOMEONE WAS HURT, I WOULD HAVE BEEN DESTROYED.
11. WE ALL KNOW THAT THESE DOORS ARE NOT ALWAYS EASY TO ARM AND DISARM.
12. THEY STICK AND SLIDE OUT OF POS AND MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO LOCK INTO PLACE -- ESPECIALLY WHEN WORKING LONG HRS.
13. WE'RE TIRED AND REALLY **NEED TO PAY SPECIAL ATTN TO OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.**
14. WE NEED TO XCHK, XCHK.

The FA reporter demonstrates their safety knowledge in writing about the potential consequences of an unintentionally inflated slide (also referred to as a blown slide)² – *someone could have been killed or maimed for life* (Line 2) and *had the slide deployed and someone was hurt, I would have been destroyed* (Line 10). The reporter elaborates on this potential for injury in Lines 11 and 12, detailing how door arming mechanisms can be faulty. Additionally, in Line 6 the FA reporter displays their knowledge of and familiarity with the aircraft (*these B737s have no armed indicator on the outside of the aircraft nor in the cockpit*).

Yet the report also includes phrases which would not be found in aviation institutional communications. Line 3 tells the primary audience that *this thought* [of an inadvertent injury due to slide deployment] *is so devastating to me*, calling attention to the FA reporter's status as a human being, aware of the responsibility for other human lives. Similarly, in Line 13 the reporter reminds the audience that *we're tired and really need to pay special [attention] to our responsibilities*. Example 4.4 blends the reporter's knowledge of occupational practices with their status as a safety worker as well as an emotional labourer (cf. Hochschild 2003). This melding of occupational knowledge serves to construct the FA reporter as a knowledgeable flight attendant who is both emotional about and responsible for the safety of their passengers – all factors become part of their identity.

There are times when slides are inadvertently deployed, as Example 4.5 demonstrates:

Example 4.5

736552 (2007-04)

1. AT THE COMMAND OF THE PURSER'S 'FLT ATTENDANTS DISARM DOORS FOR ARR' CALL, I WENT TO DOOR 1R TO DISARM.
2. I LIFTED THE PLASTIC COVER OF THE ARM AND DISARM LEVER AND PUSHED IN THE BUTTON, WHICH WAS WHITE BECAUSE THE COLORED PAINT HAD CHIPPED OFF.
3. WHILE ATTEMPTING TO PULL DOWN ON THE ARM WITH MY R HAND, THE BUTTON FELT AS THOUGH IT WAS ALREADY DEPRESSED AND STUCK, AND THE DISARMING LEVER WOULD NOT COMPLETELY DISARM AS IT WAS STUCK WHILE PULLING DOWN.
4. I APPLIED FORCE TO THE LEVER AND IT WOULD NOT GO FULLY INTO THE DISARM POS.
5. I TURNED MY HEAD BACK TO COMMENT TO THE PURSER THAT 'THE DOOR IS STUCK' AND THEN THE LARGE HANDLE FLEW UP INTO MY L WRIST.

² Aircraft evacuation slides are pneumatically inflated. If a slide inflates whilst the aircraft is parked at the gate, the force with which it inflates can potentially cause serious injury to a person, depending on how close they were standing to the slide pack.

6. I HEARD AND SAW THE DOOR OPEN AND STEPPED BACK TO AVOID THE DOOR HITTING ME.
7. THE SLIDE THEN BEGAN TO DEPLOY AND **I SHOUTED OUT THE DOOR.** 'LOOK OUT' TO THOSE DOWN BELOW AND STOOD ASIDE.
8. I THEN SAW SEVERAL PEOPLE BELOW AND ASKED IF EVERYONE ON THE GND WAS OK AND RECEIVED A CONFIRMING HEAD NOD.
9. I GAVE A THUMBS UP SIGNAL AND A MAN ON THE GND GAVE THUMBS UP BACK THAT EVERYTHING WAS OK.
10. MY L WRIST IS SORE AND THERE IS A PIECE OF MY WATCH CHIPPED OFF THAT I WORE ON MY L WRIST.
11. I WAS ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT A SUPVR.

This report begins by directly quoting the *'flight attendants disarm doors for arrival'* call (Line 1) which is the indication (initiated by the Lead Flight Attendant or LFA; see Chapter 3) to flight attendants that the aircraft has arrived at the gate and it is safe to disarm aircraft doors. Additionally, Line 1 describes the FA reporter as reacting to the *command of the purser*, which reproduces occupational practices of following orders, orienting to the Chain of Command hierarchy, and demonstrating knowledge about everyday practices in the aircraft.

Line 2 reports that the flight attendant *lifted the plastic cover of the arm and disarm lever*. Referring to the *arm and disarm level* by how it is referenced in institutional communication (e.g., FA operation manual; cf. NWA 1999) both reproduces occupational discursive practices and demonstrates their knowledge of institutionally sanctioned terms for aircraft parts. Line 2 also notes that the *button was white because the colored paint had chipped off*. This phrase works to communicate to the primary audience of ASRS analysts the occupationally salient knowledge about the appearance of this particular aircraft door and how this appearance changes over time and with use. Line 2 thus works in several ways to construct the FA reporter as knowledgeable about institutionally sanctioned discursive practices and occupationally salient information.

In Line 7 the FA reporter writes that *The slide then began to deploy*. As in Example 4.4 we see the word *deploy* used to describe the action of the emergency slide, reproducing institutional discourse. Line 7 then goes on to report that the flight attendant *shouted out the door, 'Look out' to those down below*. This action demonstrates occupational safety knowledge and situational awareness. The airport tarmac is crowded with people, and the FA reporter reproduces his or her direct quote warning (*'look out'*) about the impending slide deployment, demonstrating that they are both aware of the possibility of individuals in the path of the inflating slide and concerned about their safety.

Occupational practices are reproduced in Lines 3 and 4. For example Line 3 contains the phrase *While attempting to pull down on the arm*. The use of the word

attempting (instead of ‘trying’) works to contribute to the construction of the FA reporter as using technical and professional language associated with the aviation industry. Similarly, the phrases *as though it was already depressed* and *the disarming lever would not completely disarm* (also in Line 3) index stances of professionalism and occupational knowledge. The reporter uses phrases and words which are associated with discourse used in institutional communications, for example training manuals and FA operations manuals (e.g., NWA 1999). For example, Line 4, *I applied force to the lever and it would not go fully into the disarm [position]*, could have been written differently (e.g., ‘I pushed hard on the lever but it wouldn’t move.’). Use of the phrase *applied force* and lack of contractions contributes to the formal tone of discourse seen in institutional communications.

The first nine lines of the report are depersonalised: the FA reporter presents as a working professional who is merely reporting the facts of an unfortunate incident. The report also makes extensive use of phrases and words associated with or taken from institutional communications (e.g., NWA 2000, 1999), which work to index a stance of professionalism. Line 10 marks a frame shift. The reporter shifts footing by calling attention to the physical and material damage that the inadvertent slide deployment has caused (*My L wrist is sore and there is a piece of my watch chipped off that I wore on my L wrist.*). This footing shift – from reporter to eyewitness with personal involvement – works to demonstrate to the primary audience the extent of the force of the slide deployment and door opening. The shift in footing also serves as a contrast to the first nine lines of the report, which are focused on what is happening around the FA reporter, and not the reporter personally.

Despite the more self-focused footing in Line 10, it is as objective and professional in tone (cf. Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2) as the rest of the report. Note the reporter does not elaborate on their wrist pain, or use emphasising adverbs and hyperbolic words as in Example 4.4, Line 3 (*This thought is so devastating to me.*). Nor does the FA reporter elaborate on the watch damage. Line 10, like the previous lines, indexes a stance of professionalism.

Examples 4.4 and 4.5 differ in tone, yet both contain evidence that marks them as written by working, professional flight attendants. Both use words and phrases associated with the aviation industry (e.g., *had the slide deployed*, Example 4.4, Line 10; *The slide then began to deploy*, Example 4.5, Line 7), and with the FA profession (e.g., *The purser found the door armed and disarmed it*, Example 4.4, Line 4; *The disarming lever would not completely disarm*, Example 4.5, Line 3). While the footing of Example 4.4 may be

different to Example 4.5, it nonetheless shows evidence of emotional labour tasks (e.g., *Someone could have been killed or maimed for life. This thought is so devastating to me*, Lines 2-3), which are primary if tacit FA occupational expectations as Hochschild (2003) has shown.

Section summary

This section has addressed how flight attendants display safety knowledge in the reports and has drawn from two primary themes in the report corpus: hypothetical safety situations and door responsibilities. Note that these two themes are not discrete: Example 4.4 contains a hypothetical safety situation in Line 10: *Had the slide deployed and someone was hurt, I would have been destroyed*.

In the reports, flight attendants demonstrate their safety knowledge by describing safety-related institutional and occupational practices. Drawing on discourse which is associated with the aviation industry and institutional authorities directly indexes stances of professionalism, knowledge, capability, and authority. The reports are serious in tone, contributing to the authoritative stance. Even when reports contain personal opinions or feelings (as in Examples 4.3 and 4.4), they nonetheless describe institutional and occupational practices, in many instances using words and phrases that are also used in institutional communication (e.g., FA manuals; FAA documents).

4.2 Passengers as a resource for flight attendant concerns

The safety reports detail inflight incidents which usually do not primarily concern passenger service duties. Passenger service duty details that do occur are generally included in the reports to provide context for the reported incidents. This is not to say that passengers or service details are insignificant to the incident reports. Indeed, the data suggest that passengers are used as resources to support or strengthen assertions made by flight attendants (FAs) in their reports. Forty reports in the 150-report corpus (approximately 27%) contain some evidence of this tactic, as can be seen in Example 4.6, which concerns a passenger illness:

Example 4.6

601176 (2003-11)

1. I FINISHED BUSINESS CLASS BEVERAGE SVC, NOTICED FLT ATTENDANT #4 KNEELING OVER PAX.
2. I CLBED OVER FLT ATTENDANT #4 AND PAX.
3. ANOTHER FLT ATTENDANT HANDED ME AED.
4. I PUT ON GLOVES AND FELT PAX'S FOREHEAD, PAX WAS SWEATY AND COLD.

5. I TURNED ON AED WHILE #4 FLT ATTENDANT REMOVED SHIRT AND SWEATER.
6. I TRIED TO SHAVE CHEST, RAZOR DIDN'T WORK, PAX HAD TOO MUCH HAIR.
7. FLT ATTENDANT #4 FLT ADMINISTERED OXYGEN.
8. PAX PASSED IN AND OUT OF CONSCIOUSNESS.
9. FLT ATTENDANT GAVE PAX ORANGE JUICE.
10. PAX LOOKED GRAY.
11. **I WISH I WAS BETTER RESTED, I WOULD HAVE FELT MORE CONFIDENT DURING THE SIT.**
12. 6 HRS OF SLEEP PLUS A HEADACHE MEDICINE DID AFFECT MY JUDGEMENT.
13. OUR LAYOVER WAS CUT TOO SHORT DUE TO A DELAY LEAVING THE PREVIOUS DAY.
14. THE SIT LEFT ME EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINED.

The report includes many reproductions of occupational discursive practices. For example, Line 1 makes reference to the *business class beverage svc.* The FA reporter could instead have used a different term, for example ‘serving drinks up front’. Instead, the industry standard term is used. Line 1 also foregrounds the occupational practice of flight attendant work positions in the aircraft cabin in referring to the reporter’s coworker as *flt attendant #4* (and not, for example, ‘the forward FA’ or ‘the FA working up front’).

The FA reporter includes in the report details which are part of the medical emergency but which are not necessary to report. For example, Line 6 (*I tried to shave chest, razor didn’t work, pax had too much hair*) includes intimate details of the passenger’s body as well as is an explicit reminder of the physicality of such a medical emergency. The FA reporter is not dealing with the plastic mannequins used in training exercises; instead, there is a real human being on the floor with complications that potentially hinder the resuscitation. Moreover, these small details (e.g., Line 4, *I put on gloves and felt pax’s forehead, pax was sweaty and cold*; Line 6, referenced above) make explicit the training the FA reporter has undergone. In training, because flight attendants are working with plastic mannequins, such details as chest hair and sweaty foreheads are explicitly discussed because they are potentially necessary to the medical situation.

This example is about a medical emergency. Lines 1-10 are objective and other-focused, and report only the facts of the incident as the flight attendant reporter sees them, concerned with occupationally related tasks. Yet the frame shift in Line 11: *I wish I was better rested, I would have felt more confident during the [situation]* shifts the focus of the report to the flight attendant reporter’s own physical and mental state. Line 12, *6 hrs of sleep plus a headache medicine did affect my judgement*, situates the FA reporter as less capable than Lines 1-10 may have done. The detail raises questions. The passenger survived the incident, so Lines 11-14 are included in the report for a reason other than reporting the facts of the incident as the FA reporter experienced and remembered them.

The lines use the passenger incident as a resource for the FA reporter’s concern of

fatigue and short layovers – a larger issue in the profession. Note that the FA specifically links feeling tired with handling of the incident (Line 11, *I wish I was better rested, I would have felt more confident during the [situation]*). The report uses the following two lines to suggest work-related and management-related causes for the reporter's fatigue (*6 hrs of sleep plus a headache medicine did affect my judgement*, Line 12; *Our layover was cut too short due to a delay leaving the previous day*, Line 13). While it might be true that the flight attendant's judgement would have been different had the layover been longer, the FA suggests a personal benefit from a longer layover. Layover time is personal time, when flight attendants are free to do as they wish. There are no institutional or occupational constraints on behaviour or action; flight attendants may sleep, shop, eat, exercise, or watch television, to name a few common layover activities. There are no passengers to care for, no drinks to serve, no turbulence, and no potential emergencies for which flight attendants are responsible.

Flight attendant fatigue is a pervasive issue in commercial aviation (FAA 2007), and many flight attendants complain amongst themselves about layovers which are at or just above the FAA-mandated minimum of nine hours. However, longer layovers mean shorter duty days, which translates into less amount of time which flight attendants work. Thus there is a tension between duty time and layover time. Many flight attendants would like longer layovers, but their desires have not been addressed by airline management to their satisfaction, and layover time in actuality is decreasing. Instead of mentioning the issue in terms of their own personal comfort, the FA reporter in Example 4.6 has drawn on the institutional practice of maintaining passenger safety to highlight some potential and actual effects of short layovers. It would violate the norms of communication in the ASRS safety reports for flight attendants to draw attention to the possibility that they would benefit personally from longer layovers (increased time to themselves for sleeping, sight-seeing, etc.). However, using passenger comfort and safety as resources to highlight the issue of layover time and associated fatigue accomplishes at least three objectives: 1) explicit orientation to occupational expectations of passenger care; 2) reproduction of occupational and institutional discursive practices (e.g., using industry standard terms); and 3) implicit acknowledgement of the institutional hierarchical position of flight attendants and relative lack of control over their own comfort. Whilst they are tasked with taking care of passengers in the cabin, flight attendants have relatively little control over their own comfort when they are at work.

Example 4.7 is taken from a report concerning a passenger death:

Example 4.7

606468 (2003-11)

[unnecessary lines removed]³

19. I INFORMED COCKPIT AND CONTINUED TO ASSIST FLT ATTENDANT #5 WITH THE SVC.
20. FLT ATTENDANTS IN MAIN CABIN ALSO CONTINUED THEIR SVC, ANSWERING CONCERNED PAX QUESTIONS.
21. MINS LATER, PAX HAD ANOTHER SEIZURE.
22. FLT ATTENDANT #3 ASKED ME FOR THE ENHANCED MEDICAL KIT AND RESUSCITATION BAG.
23. FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN SEVERAL PROCS TO HELP PAX, INCLUDING CPR.
24. I CONTACTED COCKPIT TO DIVERT.
25. FLT ATTENDANTS NOT ASSISTING IN THE EMER PREPARED CABIN FOR LNDG.
26. 2 OR 3 FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED MEDICAL PERSONNEL WHILE WE DSNDED SO THE REST OF US DECIDED THAT THE REMAINING 4 OF US WOULD EACH MAN A SET OF EXIT DOORS.
27. WERE MET WITH DIFFICULT ARPT OFFICIALS.
28. THE MWCR OFFICIALS WERE VERY UNCOOPERATIVE.
29. AN AGGRAVATING SIT THAT NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH AN ESTIMATED 2 HRS TO RESOLVE.
30. **PAX WERE ALSO IN DISBELIEF** AS FOR THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK TO REMOVE THE DECEASED PAX AND DEPART FOR MIA.

[unnecessary lines removed]

In Lines 1-18 (which are here omitted; see Appendix B for full report), the FA reporter details several seizures that a passenger has. The FA pages for a doctor onboard to help with the medical situation, and several flight attendants assist the responding doctor during the situation. Lines 19-26 describe occupational practices such as caring for passengers (e.g., Line 20, *Flt attendants in main cabin also continued their [service], answering concerned [passenger] questions*) and institutional practices such as flight attendants working together as a team (e.g., Line 19, *I informed cockpit and continued to assist flt attendant #5 with the [service]*).

Lines 27 shifts frame, from focusing on the incident and passenger-related medical tasks, to matters external to the cabin including administrative tasks dealing with paperwork and red tape. The situation was likely quite stressful for the cabin crew; however, the report is objective in tone and lacking personal opinion or reports on the FA reporter's own emotional state (as we saw in Example 4.6, Line 14, above). The words *difficult* (Line 27), *uncooperative* (Line 28), and *aggravating* (Line 29) indicate frustration, yet also continue the position of the FA reporter as professional and objective. Note that the report does not include the FA reporter's personal feelings. Moreover, Line 28 includes *MWCR*, which is the International Civil Aviation Organisation abbreviation

³ See Appendix B for full report.

for the international airport serving Grand Cayman. I would suggest that this occupationally salient abbreviation distances from and mitigates a potential confrontational stance which could occur through the word *uncooperative*.

The first 29 lines contain no reference to passenger concerns. When passengers are mentioned, it is either within the context of service (e.g., Line 20, *Flt attendants in main cabin also continued their [service]*) or regarding the passenger who is having seizures. The footing shifts in Line 30. The FA reporter shifts from aligning with fellow flight attendants (in Lines 1-26) to including passengers in the focus. The shift to include passengers works to reinforce the assertions in Lines 27-29. It is not merely the FA reporter who was inconvenienced or aggravated, but also the passengers, for whom the industry, as well as flight attendants, have duty of care.

Thus far in Section 4.2, I have discussed accounts reporting medical situations where passengers were the focus of the flight attendant tasks. Example 4.8 reports on inflight turbulence:

Example 4.8

604898 (2004-01)

1. ABOUT 1 HR AFTER DEP, WE WERE GOING OVER A BAND OF THUNDERHEADS.
2. THE COCKPIT CREW THOUGHT WE WERE IN THE CLR ABOVE THEM, BUT WE WERE NOT AND WE HIT A BIG BUMP AND IN LESS THAN A SECOND LATER WE DROPPED OVER 200 FT IN LESS THAN 1/2 SECOND.
3. ALL THE CREW WERE IN THE AISLE AND EVERYONE CAME OFF THE FLOOR.
4. WE WERE VERY LUCKY, ALL PAX WERE BUCKLED IN.
5. THE FLT ATTENDANTS IN THE VERY BACK OF THE AIRPLANE HIT THE CEILING AND THE INSERTS OF BEVERAGES ON TOP OF THE CART CAME DOWN ON TOP OF THEM AS THEY LAY ON THE FLOOR.
6. I HIT THE CEILING OF THE MD-11 TWICE IN 3 WKS IN 1991 SO I KNEW IT WAS ABOUT TO HAPPEN SO I TUCKED INTO A BALL TO MAKE MYSELF SHORTER.
7. THE ACFT I HAD, FLEW APART AND ALL THE GLASS, CHINA, METAL SERVING PIECES FLEW UP IN THE AIR AND THE CART COLLAPSED.
8. THE GLASS AND CHINA ON THE PAX'S TRAYS FLEW OFF IN THE AIR AND HIT THE R SIDE WALL.
9. WE HAD MODERATE TO HVY TURB FOR ABOUT ANOTHER 30 MINS AND OFF AND ON THE REST OF THE WAY HOME.
10. THE CAPT NEVER ASKED IF ANY OF US WANTED TO GO BACK TO RJAA.
11. MOST OF THE FLT ATTENDANTS WOULD HAVE VOTED TO TURN BACK TO RJAA.
12. **SOME PAX,** AFTER WE ARRIVED IN ZZZ, DID NOT WANT TO CONTINUE ON THEIR CONNECTING FLTS, THEY WERE TOO UPSET.
13. TO HAVE EVERYONE CONTINUE FOR 7 1/2 HRS AFTER SUCH AN ORDEAL IS UNACCEPTABLE.

There are numerous institutional and occupational practices reproduced in this report. Line 1 describes the phase of flight (*About 1 hr after [departure]*). Line 2 uses the historical industry term *The cockpit crew* to refer to pilots. Although the term 'flight

deck' is currently the term preferred by airlines and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to refer to the space where pilots work in aircraft, 'cockpit' is still frequently used by both those working in the aviation industry and by passengers. Lines 10 and 11 refer to *RJAA*, the International Civil Aviation Organization abbreviation for Tokyo Narita International Airport. This institutional abbreviation is used instead of, for example, referring to 'the departure airport'.

Line 5 makes reference to the *inserts of the beverages on top of the cart*, communicating the FA reporter's familiarity with service practices and equipment. Indeed, although the report does not explicitly state what the flight attendants were doing at the moment the aircraft hit the turbulence, it is implicitly stated in the occupational practices which are reproduced in Line 1 (*About 1 hr after [departure]*), Line 5 (*The flight attendants in the very back of the airplane hit the ceiling and the inserts of beverages on top of the cart came down on top of them*), and Line 8 (*The glass and china on the [passengers'] trays flew off in the air*): flight attendants were in the aisles with the meal service. Thus, many pieces of service equipment would have been out of their containers and flight attendants with beverage and meal carts would have been in the aisles, contributing to a large potential for danger. The repetition of *glass, china* (Line 7) and *glass and china* (Line 8) reinforces the danger for flight attendants which is posed by unexpected turbulence. Not only are flight attendants susceptible to becoming airborne themselves, they also may be at risk of other airborne projectiles including broken glass, china, and metal cutlery.

Line 4 makes explicit the FA reporter's understanding that passenger care is a primary flight attendant duty. Interestingly this assertion follows Line 3 (*All the crew were in the aisle and everyone came off the floor*), which must have been a frightening experience for the FA reporter. Yet the report never mentions the emotional state of the cabin crew, only that they were *lucky* because *all [passengers] were buckled in* – their charges were safe.

Lines 1-9 constructs the flight attendants as victims of a traumatic incident caused by unforeseen turbulence. Line 10 marks a frame shift away from the condition of the aircraft cabin and onto the institutional expectations with respect to Crew Resource Management (CRM). Line 10 demonstrates the institutional position of the captain as head of the inflight Chain of Command, with the ability to control the lives of flight attendants in the crew. The captain is constructed as unconcerned about the wishes of the flight attendants; the implicit assertion is that the captain should have contacted the flight attendants to solicit their input regarding the continuation of the flight. Line 11 reinforces

this assertion because *Most of the flight attendants would have voted to turn back to [Narita]* given the upsetting incident of turbulence.

Line 12 marks a second frame shift, away from CRM-related issues and the concerns of flight attendants to passenger concerns. Not only did the captain ignore the concerns of the flight attendants, s/he also (and perhaps more importantly, with respect to commercial aviation) ignored the wishes of paying passengers who were upset by the turbulence. In this second frame shift, passengers are used as a resource for the assertions of the FA reporter. The first nine lines of Example 4.8 provide several details of the severity of the turbulence and the conditions of the cabin. They underline the contrast presented in Lines 10 and 11, which construct the captain as unconcerned for the well-being of the flight attendants. Line 12 increases the strength of the assertion of the report by highlighting the consequences of continuing the flight after the turbulence. It is not enough for the FA reporter to state that *most of the flight attendants would have voted to turn back*. The reporter asserts that the turbulence was so severe that some passengers - a main source of revenue for commercial airlines - *were too upset* to continue their own travels.

Section summary

In Example 4.6, short layovers are cited as contributing to the FA reporter's lack of confidence during the medical incident. Longer layovers, with increased time for sleep, would likely add to the FA reporter's own physical comfort, as well as contributing to increased mental alertness. In Example 4.7, the FA reporter supports their own assertion that the airport officials were uncooperative and difficult by including the reactions of passengers to the situation. Example 4.8 includes the distress of passengers to reinforce the FA reporter's construction of the traumatic turbulence.

Recall that these reports are written by flight attendants working in commercial aviation, where passenger travel contributes a large portion of airlines' profits and thus flight attendant wages. The commercial aviation industry contributes a significant portion to the US economy (cf. FAA 2012b). Therefore, it is in the interests of institutional parties that passengers are kept comfortable and satisfied before, during, and after flight. I would argue that the FA reporters who include such passenger reaction and detail in their reports do so strategically. There is the appearance of altruism or emotional labour embedded in their reported actions, but there is also the implicit desire of self-preservation and insurance that the responsibility for negative outcomes is appropriately distributed.

4.3 Pilots and the Chain of Command

Flight attendants (FAs) have a closer working relationship with pilots than with other aviation employee groups (e.g., baggage handlers, gate agents, ticket agents, etc). While flight attendants and pilots work in separate parts of the aircraft, they still work in the same general workspace, the airplane, and must rely on each other during both routine and non-routine situations in order to have the best chances of survival or successful outcome (i.e., no damage to human life or aircraft; cf. Clark 2007; Whitelegg 2007). Moreover, Crew Resource Management (CRM) protocols dictate that the captain's pre-flight briefing with the cabin crew focuses on 'team-building' (FAA 2004a; see also Chapter 3). Thus, it is institutionally sanctioned that pilots and flight attendants consider each other to be part of the inflight 'team'. Nonetheless, the Chain of Command is a hierarchy, which can conflict with the notion of a 'team'.

This section focuses on the construction of pilots and the extent to which the Chain of Command is present in the safety reports. Ninety-three reports (approximately 63%) in my corpus contain discourse which recreates or discusses flight attendant/pilot interaction and communication. This discourse ranges from reconstructed conversations with pilots to merely mentioning pilots in passing (i.e., without retelling any communication between flight attendants and pilots which may have taken place during the incident). I have described in Chapter 3 the institutional hierarchy of the Chain of Command, which is reinforced and taught to flight attendants in many different discourse contexts: initial and annual training; the flight attendant/pilot pre-flight briefing; and paperwork from institutional authorities such as the FAA. The hierarchical relationship between flight attendants and pilots becomes tacit, as demonstrated in Example 4.9:

Example 4.9

607936 (2003-12)

1. 30 MINS INTO OUR MORNING FLT TO ZZZ, FLT ATTENDANT #2 AND I NOTICED A STRANGE SOUND, AND FELT A VIBRATION UNDER OUR FEET IN THE GALLEY.
2. IT SOUNDED LIKE A STEADY, RHYTHMIC (PERIODIC) GRINDING SOUND.
3. LIKE IT SOUNDS WHEN THE CARGO IS BEING PUSHED AROUND WHEN WE ARE ON THE GND.
4. **WE NOTIFIED THE CAPT AND FO.**
5. THE FO WAS SENT BACK TO IDENT THE NOISE.
6. THE CAPT DETERMINED WE SHOULD TURN AROUND AND GO BACK TO LAX.
7. FLT ATTENDANT #2 AND I ALSO FELT THE VIBRATION NEAR DOORS 2L/R, UNDER THE FLOOR CARPETING.
8. WE LANDED WITHOUT INCIDENT -- PAX WERE CALM.

Lines 1-3 provide context for the primary audience of report readers whilst at the same

time demonstrating the FA reporter's knowledge of various routine practices in commercial aviation. Line 1 states that the reporter recognised an unusual sound, which implicitly communicates that the reporter has the occupational experience to distinguish between common and expected sounds (such as the sound of landing gear retracting into the fuselage) and unusual sounds such as the one being reported. Line 3 attempts to expand on the description of the sound in Line 2 in an occupationally contextualised manner (*Like it sounds when the cargo is being pushed around when we are on the [ground]*). Line 3 also works to demonstrate to the primary audience that the FA reporter is familiar with routine occupationally related sounds which are outside of the immediate context of the aircraft cabin.

Line 4 shows the cabin crew keeping pilots informed about non-routine conditions, a tenet of CRM (see Chapter 3). The lexical order of the line – *We notified the captain and first officer* – positions the captain (head of the Chain of Command) before the first officer (second in the Chain of Command), reinforcing the Chain of Command. Line 5 implicitly reconstructs the Chain of Command; we can deduce that it was the captain who sent the first officer to identify the sound. Both the captain and first officer share the flight deck workspace, and both would have received the call from the FA reporter about the unusual sound. As head of the Chain of Command, the captain would have made the decision to have the first officer investigate the sound. The inclusion of Line 5 is interesting, as it would appear to violate post-9/11 security measures which prohibit the opening of the flight deck door unless for an emergency or personal comfort. Additionally, the captain would have been alone in the flight deck when the first officer left to investigate the sound, another violation of post-9/11 security measures. It is possible that the FA reporter includes Line 5 to communicate these potential violations to the primary audience of the report. Another possible reason is to hint at historic constructions of flight attendants by pilots, discussed in Chute and Wiener (1996: 3), namely, 'Flight-deck crews are sometimes skeptical when flight attendants report problems.' Thus, the captain would have sent the first officer to *[identify] the noise*, trusting the first officer's judgement over that of the FA reporter.

Line 6 constructs the captain as decision-maker, in keeping with their role as head of the Chain of Command. Note that there is no questioning of the captain's decision. Line 7 would appear to support the captain's decision, suggesting that the unusual sound and vibration had spread from the galley space to the floor area around the aircraft door where the flight attendants were sitting.

Lines 1 and 7 communicate the FA reporter's familiarity with the aircraft cabin, and

appear to assume that the primary audience shares this familiarity and knowledge. Line 1 states that the vibration was *felt under our feet in the galley*. Because of the inclusion of the position of *flt attendant #2*, we can deduce that the galley to which the reporter is referring is in the forward part of the cabin, between the first and second sets of aircraft exit doors. Line 7 states that the vibration was felt *near doors 2L/R, under the floor carpeting*, which indicates that the unusual vibration spanned a distance of several feet, from the first set of doors in the aircraft to the second set of doors (*doors 2L/R*).

Example 4.9 provides a ‘neutral’ example of Crew Resource Management (CRM) tenets including the Chain of Command hierarchy. The FA reporter notices an unusual sound, reports it to the pilots (discursive reproduction of the CRM practice of keeping crewmembers informed), the captain sends the first officer back to investigate (discursive reproduction of the Chain of Command hierarchy) and makes the decision to return to Los Angeles airport.

However, implicit in the report is a tension between the demands of the Chain of Command hierarchy and other tenets of CRM. Crew Resource Management exhorts that flight attendants and pilots should work together as a ‘team’, which can imply equality amongst the inflight crewmembers. Yet the Chain of Command explicitly constructs a hierarchy, placing pilots above flight attendants, and the captain as ultimate inflight authority. Thus there is a tension created between occupational expectations of equality, and institutional demands of hierarchy. This tension is pervasive in the flight attendant/pilot relationship, owing to the equally pervasive institutional and occupational influences on interaction and communication in the forms of the Chain of Command hierarchy and CRM expectations of keeping crewmembers informed and working together as an inflight ‘team’. Example 4.10 contains an example of this tension:

Example 4.10

608661 (2004-01)

[unnecessary lines removed]⁴

19. WHEN WE ARRIVED IN PHL, WE HAD 5 WHEELCHAIR PAX, INCLUDING ONE NON-AMBULATORY PAX.
20. ONLY 1 AGENT MET THE FLT SO THE FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED THE AGENT IN GETTING THE PAX INTO THE TERMINAL AREA.
21. THE PLTS WERE TRYING TO GET OFF OF THE ACFT AS WE WERE TRYING TO GET THE PAX REQUIRING ASSISTANCE INTO THEIR WHEELCHAIRS.
22. I MADE THE COMMENT THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEIR HURRY WAS BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT US AND WE COULDN'T DEPLANE UNTIL ALL OF OUR PAX WERE OFF OF THE ACFT.

⁴ See Appendix B for full report.

23. WHEN THE FLT ATTENDANTS ARRIVED AT THE HOTEL PICK UP POINT (WHICH THE PAPERWORK SHOWS 2 LOCATIONS) WE DID NOT SEE A VAN.
24. THE #1 FLT ATTENDANT CALLED THE HOTEL AND FOUND OUT THAT **THE PLTS WERE JUST ARRIVING AT THE HOTEL.**
25. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE VAN WOULD BE SENT BACK FOR US AND IT WOULD BE ABOUT 10 MINS.

[unnecessary lines removed]

Lines 1-18 (which are available to read in Appendix B) report several events which contributed to creating a delay in arrival to the airport where the crew's layover was to take place. Line 19 continues detailing the many events which this cabin crew faced during their long duty day. Line 20 draws on occupational practices to communicate that flight attendants were going beyond their required duties to deplane passengers due to the lack of airport staff to assist in deplaning passengers who needed additional help. Flight attendant duties generally end once aircraft are parked. The arrival airport is notified by pilots enroute if there are passengers who need assistance deplaning, or who require a wheelchair inside the airport terminal, and generally there are staff waiting to assist. If airport staff are unavailable, then flight attendants will sometimes help with such duties, especially if the arriving flight is the last one of the day for the flight attendants, and they are going to their layover.

Line 21 describes occupationally related expectations. Pilots are not required to assist with passenger care duties, and are free to leave the aircraft once their flight deck duties are finished. Flight attendants are not allowed to leave an aircraft if there are passengers onboard; therefore it is in the flight attendants' interest to help airport staff with passengers. This difference in tasks and related behaviour can create tensions between flight attendants and pilots, alluded to in Line 22.

The phrase *they couldn't leave without us* in Line 22 refers to occupational practice. If cabin and flight crews are staying overnight in the same city, it is common practice (indeed, expected behaviour) for one crew to wait for the other, and both crews to ride in the same transportation to the layover hotel. The report does not indicate if both crews will be departing on the same flight the following morning, but that fact would not impact the expectation by the flight attendants that the pilots would not depart the airport for the layover hotel without the cabin crew. Lines 23 and 24 reveal that the pilots violated this occupational practice, and did not wait for the flight attendants before leaving the airport for their layover hotel. The report goes on to state that the flight attendants did not have their legally mandated rest time, due in part to the unexpected and unnecessary wait at the airport (Line 25).

The pilots in Example 4.10 violated a common occupational practice that is also

part of Crew Resource Management (CRM): stay together as one crew. Anecdotally, in my 10 years of working as a flight attendant, I experienced being left behind by pilots fewer than five times; such is the rarity of this occurrence. Given the stressful workday which the flight attendants had experienced, and the impending short layover, the FA reporter understandably would have been upset. Yet in the report, the FA reporter does not cite the actions of the pilots as causing their short layover and resulting fatigue. Nor is there any attempt in the report to mitigate the powerful position of pilots over flight attendants or to openly criticise the pilots' actions. However, there is a tension between Chain of Command hierarchy and CRM 'team' expectations evident in the report, in Lines 22-24. This hierarchy/team tension is so embedded into the flight attendant/pilot working relationship that it is rarely acknowledged, even when flight attendants are disadvantaged. However, the data suggest that at times the tension is implicitly addressed as in Example 4.10, Line 22, which marks a frame shift designed to highlight the anomalous actions of the pilots in a way which does not undermine the Chain of Command hierarchy.

Example 4.11 describes another incident whereby the flight attendants in the incident are impacted by decisions made by pilots. In this report, the FA reporter is describing a potentially hazardous situation in the aircraft cabin, in which water is leaking into the cabin from an unknown source.

Example 4.11

750699 (2007-08)

[unnecessary lines removed]⁵

23. I INFORMED THAT CAPT OF OUR PREVIOUS PROBLEM AND HE SEEMED INCREDULOUS ABOUT THE WHOLE THING.
24. THEN RIGHT BEFORE BOARDING, THE WATER STARTED TO POUR IN AGAIN.
25. WE INFORMED THE CAPT IMMEDIATELY AND HE GOT TO SEE WITH HIS OWN EYES WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO US THE PREVIOUS DAY.
26. HE MADE THE DECISION TO REFUSE THE PLANE BASED ON THE FACT THAT THE PLANE HAD NEVER BEEN FULLY INSPECTED AFTER THE FIRST INCIDENT.
27. HE WANTED THE PANELS PULLED OUT TO MAKE SURE THERE WASN'T ANY DAMAGE FROM ALL THE STANDING WATER.
28. I'M SURE HE HAD OTHER REASONS **ONLY PLTS KNOW ABOUT.**

Lines 1-22 (which can be read in Appendix B) detail an unusual water leak into the cabin. The flight attendants had voiced their concerns to the captain for the safety of the aircraft and the comfort of passengers, but were told the plane was safe. The following day the FA reporter was preparing the cabin for departure and realised that the aircraft was the

⁵ See Appendix B for full report.

same one from the previous night, still with the leak.

Line 23 demonstrates the Crew Resource Management (CRM) tenet of keeping the entire crew informed of conditions, as well as Chain of Command practices which call for cabin issues to be reported to the captain. However, Line 23 highlights an issue which was discussed in Example 4.9, namely the implicit distrust of flight attendants by pilots with respect to safety-related aircraft conditions. Despite the FA reporter personally experiencing the conditions, the captain *seemed incredulous*. Line 23 aligns the FA reporter away from the captain; this alignment continues in Line 25.

Despite the captain disbelieving the FA reporter (and later witnessing the reported event for himself), Example 4.11 constructs both the FA reporter and the captain as following CRM principles and as adhering to their positions in the Chain of Command. Line 25 shows the flight attendants keeping crewmembers informed (CRM) and reporting conditions to the captain (Chain of Command hierarchy). Line 26 describes the captain as making a decision which ultimately affects the entire crew and the passengers, yet as head of the Chain of Command it is the duty of the captain to make such a decision. Line 27 describes the captain as continuing his duties as head of the Chain of Command, and therefore having ultimate authority over the aircraft.

Line 28 continues the disalignment of the FA reporter and the captain. Indeed, the line works to distance the FA reporter from pilots, and marks a frame shift away from the implicit situational tension in Lines 23-25 to highlighting the institutional and occupational differences between flight attendants and pilots. In alluding to a hypothetical knowledge possessed only by pilots, the FA reporter is able to manage the operation-based tension between Chain of Command hierarchical distances between flight attendants and pilots and CRM-instigated constructions of an inflight ‘team’. It is true that pilots possess knowledge not shared by flight attendants; and some of this knowledge is related to pilots’ position of greater institutional authority in the Chain of Command. Thus the allusion to such pilot-only knowledge is indicative of the Chain of Command hierarchy. The assertion *I’m sure he had other reasons* attempts to maintain a ‘team’ construction by citing the belief of the FA reporter in the captain to do what is in the best interest of the inflight crew of flight attendants and pilots.

In Examples 4.9-4.11 flight attendants again have implicitly managed this tension between the Chain of Command hierarchy and a CRM-taught ‘team’ construction, using various means which are not necessarily recognisable to readers unfamiliar with commercial aviation practices. Another way of managing the hierarchy/‘team’ tension is explicitly commenting on discrete tasks or activities related to hierarchical positions, as in

Example 4.12:

Example 4.12

603600 (2003-12)

1. SHORTLY AFTER TKOF, CAPT CALLED FLT ATTENDANTS TO SAY THAT HE HAD A LIGHT INDICATING THAT THE AFT GALLEY DOOR WAS OPEN (NOT SEALED OR CLOSED).
2. HE ASSURED US THAT THE DOOR COULD NOT OPEN INFLT.
3. ABOUT 20- 25 MINS OUT OF ZZZ, THE CAPT CALLED AGAIN, ASKED US ALL TO GET ON THE PHONE, TO SAY THAT IT APPEARED THAT WE HAD LOST HYDS ON THE RIGHT HAND SIDE, ASKED US TO BE AWARE OF EVERYTHING UPON LNDG -- SPARKS, FIRE, ETC.
4. HE ALSO INFORMED US THAT THERE WOULD BE FIRE TRUCKS MEETING THE FLT.
5. WE LANDED WITHOUT INCIDENT.
6. I FELT THE CAPT DID A SUPERB JOB, AND THAT **HE RESPECTED FLT ATTENDANTS BECAUSE HE KEPT US WELL INFORMED.**
7. I FELT THERE WERE TOO MANY THINGS WRONG WITH THAT ACFT AND I WAS GLAD THAT WE DID NOT HAVE TO FLY IT BACK.
8. WHILE ON FINAL, I REALIZED, AS FLT ATTENDANT #1, YOU REALLY HAVE NO WAY TO SEE WHAT IS GOING ON OUTSIDE THE ACFT, AND THAT WAS UNSETTLING.

Line 1 describes CRM practices: the captain calls the flight attendants to keep them informed of conditions. Line 2 demonstrates Chain of Command practices: the captain draws on his authoritative position as head of the Chain of Command to address flight attendant fears. The word *assured* reinforces this authority, indexing a parental figure or someone having the knowledge to provide such information and the status to support it. For example, a caterer assuring flight attendants that the door would not open would be less persuasive than the captain saying the same words. Lines 3 and 4 demonstrate the CRM practices of keeping crewmembers informed of aircraft conditions. The captain is specific in his information which allows the flight attendants to be as prepared as possible for the landing.

Line 6 marks a frame shift, from talk about the occupational safety duties which concerned the FA reporter to commentary on institutional and occupational tasks related to the role of captain. The report is no longer concerned with the safety of the aircraft, passengers, or crew, and instead is concerned with inter-crew dynamics and the captain's attitude to flight attendants. Moreover, the reference to 'respect' introduces the possibility that the captain would not or does not usually respect flight attendants.

While the Chain of Command hierarchy does not specify flight attendant/pilot interactional techniques, the CRM 'team' element suggests that crewmembers, especially the captain, treat each other with politeness and respect. For the FA reporter, respecting flight attendants stems in part from following CRM communication guidelines. Respect –

consideration for and attention to personal feelings – can also clash with the indexical stance of authority figure in Line 2 (*He assured us that the door could not open inflt*) who has the status to *assure* flight attendants about safety operations.

Lines 7 and 8 mark another frame shift, and construct the FA reporter as fearful (*I felt there were too many things wrong with that [aircraft] and i was glad that we did not have to fly it back*, Line 7) and vulnerable (*You really have no way to see what is going on outside the acft, and that was unsettling*, Line 8). These lines contribute to an asymmetrical and one-down indirect indexical stance, which is at odds with the competent safety worker constructed in Lines 1-4 through the retelling of many occupational safety practices using words and phrases strongly linked with aviation (e.g., Line 1, *the aft galley door was open (not sealed or closed)*; Line 2, *it appeared that we had lost [hydraulics]*). However the child-like stance is compatible with the flight attendant's lower status relative to the captain in the Chain of Command hierarchy (cf. Ashcraft 2007; Chute and Wiener 1995; Whitelegg 2007).

Example 4.12 manages the tension between hierarchy and 'team' by reframing and personalising the Chain of Command hierarchy. Instead of each institutional actor playing their part, Example 4.12 introduces feelings and emotions into the Chain of Command structure, so that instead of the captain asserting his authority over the flight attendants, the playing ground was more egalitarian: he *respected flight attendants* (Line 6). In this way, the FA reporter negotiates their relatively lower status in the Chain of Command by calling attention to their relative lack of power in the cabin and the concurrent importance of the pilot living up to his role's team-communication expectations. The captain is constructed as taking charge, as assuring flight attendants about their safety, and as taking care of his crew. The FA reporter is no longer part of the 'team' but is self-reported as someone who is cared for, at times vulnerable, and reacts hierarchically to the words of the captain.

Example 4.12 manages hierarchy/'team' tension by praising the captain for doing what ostensibly should always be done by captains: keeping flight attendants informed. But the presence of Line 6 in Example 4.12 suggests that such adherence to CRM communication tenets is a marked event. Compare Example 4.12 with Example 4.13.

Example 4.13

604034 (2003-12)

1. RIGHT AFTER TKOF, WE STARTED TO SMELL SMOKE.
2. IT SEEMED LIKE ELECTRICAL SMOKE.
3. I WENT TO THE GALLEY AND TURNED OFF THE OVENS, COFFEE MAKER AND

CHILLERS.

4. CHIMES STARTED TO GO OFF AND I SAW, BY THE PHONE, IT WAS A LAVATORY SMOKE BUTTON BLINKING RED.
5. I WENT AND GRABBED THE PBE (PERSONAL BREATHING EQUIP) AND HALON AND STARTED TO CHK THE 4 AFT LAVATORIES FOR SMOKE.
6. WE STARTED TO SEE SMOKE IN THE CABIN.
7. FOR ABOUT 10 MINS, WE WERE ALL LOOKING FOR THE SOURCE, BUT COULD NOT FIND IT.
8. **THE COCKPIT FINALLY TOLD US** THAT IT WAS A HEATING PACK ON THE R SIDE OF THE ACFT AND THAT IT GOT DEICING FLUID INSIDE WHICH CAUSED THE BURNING SMELL.
9. THEY SAID THEY HAD TURNED IT OFF.
10. THE ENTIRE TIME THEY DIDN'T REALIZE THAT SMOKE WAS IN THE CABIN AND PAX WERE PANICKING WHILE THE CREW WAS TRYING TO FIND THE SOURCE.
11. **THEY FAILED TO COMMUNICATE WITH US** AND LET US KNOW THE CAUSE OF THE PROB.

Line 1 immediately orients the reader to the imminent danger that the FA reporter was experiencing. Line 2 demonstrates the reporter's safety knowledge by refining the suspicious smell to a specific cause; it is vital for flight attendants to try to learn the type of fire so that they may best be prepared to fight it should it become necessary. Line 3 demonstrates the occupational and safety knowledge of the FA reporter: in case of smoke or fire, turn off electric equipment. The inclusion in Line 3 of the specific pieces of equipment which the flight attendant turned off demonstrates occupational knowledge of and familiarity with placement of electric equipment in the aircraft cabin. Items over which flight attendants have control are primarily located in the galley. Line 4 demonstrates occupational and safety knowledge in the unquestioned reporting of the location of the lavatory smoke detector indication. The FA reporter does not comment on the unusual location of this indication; instead it is implied that the reporter is trained and ready for such an incident, including knowing where such smoke indicators are located. The shorthand *by the phone* to refer to the aircraft interphone (located at each flight attendant station) indicates the familiarity of the FA reporter with the aircraft cabin environment.

Line 5 demonstrates the FA reporter's familiarity with occupational discourse practices in naming the emergency equipment necessary for such an incident. The phrase *started to [check] the 4 aft lavatories for smoke* describes occupational safety practices of locating the source of the smoke as quickly as possible. Line 6 demonstrates the urgency of the situation, which has escalated from the smell of smoke (Line 1) to visible smoke (Line 6). It is not entirely clear to whom the word *we* is referring; however, due to the flight attendant-specific occupational and safety practices mentioned in Lines 1-5, we can infer it refers to the cabin crew. Line 7 demonstrates both the occupational safety practice of locating the source of smoke and the unity of the cabin crew: *we were all looking for*

the source, instead of e.g., ‘I was looking’.

Line 8 marks a frame shift, from describing cabin safety matters to pilot-related tasks and occupational demands. Note the reference to aircraft equipment that is out of flight attendant control (*a heating pack on the R side of the acft*). Note, too, that the FA reporter does not refer to the pilots by their occupational titles but instead uses the metonymic physical location of *the cockpit* to refer to pilots. Line 9 places control of the situation with the pilots, not flight attendants. Line 10 creates a participant divide (through pronoun reference) between pilots who are constructed as unaware of cabin conditions (*they didn't realize that smoke was in the cabin and pax were panicking*) and flight attendants who are reported to be focused on aircraft and passenger safety (*the crew was trying to find the source*). Note that the word *crew* is used to refer to flight attendants only, and does not include pilots, lexically reinforcing the separation of flight attendants and pilots created in Line 10. Line 11 builds on the depiction of the pilots as unaware of cabin conditions, and positions the pilots as out-of-conformity to a central tenet of Crew Resource Management (CRM): keep all crewmembers informed of aircraft conditions and non-routine situations.

The word *smoke* is used six times (Lines 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 10), reinforcing the danger that the FA reporter perceived. The words *burning* (Line 8) and *panicking* (Line 10) combine with the repetition of *smoke* to contribute to the positioning of flight attendants as focused on safety and resolving the smoke-related incident as quickly as possible. These incident-related words contrast with the phrases *The cockpit finally told us* (Line 8) and *The entire time they didn't realize* (Line 10) which emphasises the length of time the flight attendants were working toward finding the source of the smoke, and at the same time emphasises the length of time the pilots were not involved in the incident.

There is a marked difference in how flight attendants and pilots are constructed in terms of awareness in Example 4.13, signified in part by the frame shift in Line 8. Flight attendants are described as safety- and incident-focused; in this incident, pilots were described as unaware of the situation in the cabin. Flight attendants and pilots are constructed as separate, neither interacting or communicating with each other except in Line 8 (*The cockpit finally told us*), after ten minutes of searching the cabin for the source of the smoke. However, a central tenet of CRM is keeping crewmembers informed, something which both flight attendants and pilots appear to have violated. There is no talk of flight attendants and pilots working together as in Example 4.9, 4.11, or 4.12. Instead, flight attendants in Example 4.13 are constructed as working independently of pilots.

In Example 4.13, the hierarchy/‘team’ tension is managed by calling attention to the

perceived failing of the pilots to keep flight attendants informed, as cited in Lines 8, 10 and 11. Flight attendants are positioned as working together as a team (Line 1, *we started to smell smoke*; Line 7, *we were all looking for the source*); however, this inflight team excludes pilots, who are viewed as uninvolved in cabin matters (Line 10, *they didn't realize that smoke was in the cabin*). There is no indication in the report that flight attendants kept pilots informed of cabin conditions. On that basis, flight attendants failed to adhere to CRM communication tenets yet it is the failings of the pilots that are cited. This marked difference in communicative expectations stems from the FA reporter's differing occupational expectations between flight attendants and pilots. For the FA reporter, it is the responsibility of the pilots (higher in the Chain of Command, and therefore higher in responsibility) to contact flight attendants. Thus, the hierarchical structure of the Chain of Command is reinforced by the non-reciprocal communicative expectation, yet it is the failure of the pilots to adhere to the CRM 'team' participation framework that is salient for the FA reporter.

Section summary

In this section I argued that a tension exists between the competing institutional demands of the Chain of Command hierarchy and the Crew Resource Management tenet of an inflight 'team'. Flight attendants are orienting to the Chain of Command hierarchy in the reports. Even when they are put at risk or suffer from actions of pilots (as in Examples 4.10, 4.11, and 4.13), flight attendants acknowledge the authoritative position which pilots have over them and do not mitigate the hierarchy. This lack of mitigation may be due to the audience and setting and norms of this particular discursive interaction. The reports are submitted to a US government agency with institutional authority; the analysts include pilots, and have greater institutional authority than the FA reporters.

At the same time, many of the reports display the CRM tenet of flight attendants and pilots working together as an inflight 'team' (as in Example 4.9), with each group playing their respective part in order to minimise damage to human life and aircraft. However, a hallmark of a team is equality – something with which the Chain of Command is at odds. As discussed in Chapter 3, flight attendants are below pilots in the Chain of Command hierarchy. Pilots, and especially the captain as head of the Chain of Command, have power over flight attendants in that the decisions pilots make impact the lives of flight attendants. Yet owing to the communicative objective and primary audience of the safety reports, reporters use various strategies in the FA-authored reports to manage the tension between inflight 'team' expectations and hierarchical demands.

4.4 Appeals to institutional authority

We have seen that flight attendants (FAs) make safety assertions and demonstrate their awareness of hypothetical safety situations in their reports in Section 4.1. In Section 4.2, I argued that flight attendants in their reports use passengers as resources to support their own safety assertions, drawing on the unique status that passengers have in commercial aviation to highlight situations which are potentially unsafe or uncomfortable for flight attendants. In Section 4.3 I argued that there is a tension between the dual Crew Resource Management (CRM) expectations of the inflight Chain of Command hierarchy and the expectation that flight attendants and pilots will work together as a united inflight ‘team’ irrespective of the numerous institutional, sociohistorical, and occupational differences between the two workgroups.

Present in all of these sections is the existence of an institutional authority that is higher than the inflight Chain of Command: the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The FAA oversees and regulates commercial aviation in the US, including the training and safety responsibilities of flight attendants. Flight attendant operation manuals (FAOMs) are approved by the FAA and contain safety- and security-related content that is mandated by the FAA. Included in FAOMs are the Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) which control and explain the legalities which regulate flight attendants and concern passengers in the cabin. It is FAA policy for a flight attendant to both carry an FAOM and keep it current with the latest revisions, bulletins, and communications from both the FAA and the airline.

Similar to using passengers as a resource to support flight attendant assertions, the data suggest that flight attendants draw on the institutional authority of the FAA to support safety-related assertions made in the safety reports, as demonstrated in Example 4.14.

Example 4.14

797036 (2008-06)

1. WE WERE STAFFED WITH 4 FLT ATTENDANTS.
2. THE JETBRIDGE PHONE RANG SEVERAL (4-5) TIMES THROUGHOUT OUR BOARDING PROCESS.
3. OUR CREW DID NOT WANT TO GET OFF THE PLANE TO ANSWER THE PHONE AS WE WERE **STAFFED AT MINIMUM**.
4. WE WERE ALSO **TOLD BY AN FAA INSPECTOR** ON THIS FLT THAT IN NO WAY SHOULD WE GET OFF THE PLANE TO ANSWER THE PHONES WHEN STAFFING IS AT MINIMUM.
5. **SECTION OF OUR FAOM** SAYS THAT WE CAN ANSWER THE PHONE.
6. THIS IS NOT ONLY CONFUSING FOR FLT ATTENDANTS, IT'S FRUSTRATING AS THE JETBRIDGE PHONE RINGS ON A REGULAR BASIS FOR NON EMER ISSUES

SUCH AS THE CREW DESK WITH REASSIGNMENTS, GATE AGENT CALLING TO SEE IF WE NEED BAG TAGS, IF A PARTICULAR PAX IS ON BOARD, ETC.

7. WITHOUT US HAVING ESP, HOW WOULD WE KNOW IF IT IS AN EMER ISSUE WHEN THE PHONE RINGS?
8. THIS IS A GRAY AREA FOR ALL FLT ATTENDANTS WHO ARE WORKING MINIMUM STAFFED FLTS.

Line 1 describes the institutional practice of cabin staffing by citing the specific number of flight attendants working the flight; in this case, four, which is the minimum number of flight attendants required to be onboard the aircraft when there are passengers present (i.e., minimum crew). It is not until Line 3 when the reporter notes the fact that they were minimum crew.

Line 4 invokes the institutional authority of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by referring to the physical presence of an FAA inspector in the aircraft cabin, which works to strengthen the FA reporter's assertion of the minimum crew Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR). The reporter underscores their safety knowledge in Line 5, describing the inconsistency between the airline-issued flight attendant manual and the FAA-mandated FAR. It is worth noting that flight attendants can be personally fined by the FAA if there is an FAA safety inspector onboard who witnesses a flight attendant violating an FAR. Thus there are financial incentives to adhering to occupational and institutional safety practices which are regulated by FARs.

Line 6 draws attention to the effect that inconsistencies between the FAOM and FAA inspector have on flight attendants: *This is not only confusing for fllt attendants, it's frustrating*. The line continues by citing occupational tasks and concerns for flight attendants that appear to be primarily concerned with passenger service (*the crew desk with reassignments, gate agent calling to see if we need bag tags, if a particular [passenger] is on board, etc*). However, flight attendants are on board for passenger safety as well as passenger comfort. The reason for staffing an aircraft with a minimum number of flight attendants is for unplanned emergencies in the cabin, when flight attendants are necessary for safe and expedited passenger evacuation. Line 7 builds on the reporter's frustration about the inability to respond to non-emergency issues by using a rhetorical device to highlight the salience of occupational safety duties.

The FA reporter asserts in Line 1 that the cabin crew could not step off of the aircraft to answer the phone as it would violate an FAR. However, this assertion is implicit, and relies on shared occupational and institutional knowledge which the primary audience of ASRS analysts may not possess. Line 3 makes explicit the implicit assertion in Line 1, by clearly stating the staffing level was minimum. The FA reporter draws on the institutional authority of the FAA, citing the words of the FAA inspector in Line 4 to

explain why the phone went unanswered. The FA reporter twice asserted the reason for the non-answering of the phone: Line 1 (*We were staffed with 4 flt attendants*) and Line 3 (*Our crew did not want to get off the plane to answer the phone as we were staffed at minimum*). However, I would argue that the reporter draws on the institutional authority of the FAA in Line 4 because of the unique setting and context of the safety reports. The institutional authority of the FAA is so great that the reporter does not mitigate it or state that the crew has ever left an aircraft staffed at minimum crew to answer the phone. In fact the FA reporter is careful to note that the cabin crew obey FARs and remain on the aircraft despite the inability to stay informed of issues related to the flight (*the crew desk with reassignments, gate agent calling to see if we need bag tags, if a particular pax is on board, etc*, Line 6).

This adherence to FARs at the cost of communication with gate agents is influenced by the primary audience of the safety reports: the ASRS analysts. The FA reporter understands that in order to drive their point home to the analysts and communicate as strongly as possible the discrepancy between the FAOM and the FAA inspector, the reporter has to make use of institutional authorities which have capital (Bourdieu 1992) with the primary audience of the safety reports, who are comprised of pilots, mechanics, and air traffic controllers but crucially not flight attendants (see Chapter 2 for further detail). The FAA dominates and regulates commercial aviation; all aviation employees must comply with FARs. Therefore drawing on this shared knowledge of the institutional authority of the FAA works to communicate to the primary audience that, like pilots and mechanics, flight attendants must comply with FARs. It is not enough to merely assert that flight attendants may not leave the aircraft when passengers are in the cabin and there is minimum flight attendant crew present; the FA reporter includes the unequivocal assertion of the FAA inspector (*in no way should we get off the plane to answer the phones when staffing is at minimum*; Line 4) to demonstrate to the primary audience of analysts the cabin crew's knowledge and compliance with FARs. Use of the FAA inspector to support the FA reporter's assertion also demonstrates to the analysts the reporter's understanding of the unique position of institutional authority which the FAA has in commercial aviation.

While not directly linked with the FAA, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) administers several aviation research institutes and publishes research on aviation (see, for example, ASRS 2012e). Additionally, NASA facilitates the institution to which flight attendants submit the incident reports that provide the data for this chapter (the Aviation Safety Reporting System, or ASRS; see Chapter 2). While it

has little authority over commercial aviation, NASA is an internationally recognised institution, and I suggest represents a powerful resource which flight attendants can use to highlight the importance of an incident or situation, as in Example 4.15:

Example 4.15

614712 (2004-04)

1. I AM WRITING **THIS LETTER** TO EXPRESS MY AND MY CO-WORKER'S CONCERN REGARDING ACR XXX FOLLOWING CURRENT FAA LAYOVER MINIMUM GUIDELINES OF 8 HRS.
2. AS IT STANDS NOW, WHEN FLYING CURRENT SEQUENCES BUILT WITH 8 HR LAYOVERS AND 10-13 HRS ON DUTY, I AND MY CO-WORKERS ARE NOT SAFE FLT ATTENDANTS.
3. FATIGUE IMPAIRS MY ABILITY TO FUNCTION WITH A CLR TRAIN OF THOUGHT, COORD, CONCENTRATION, AND SOUND JUDGEMENT.
4. I FIND MYSELF ACTING AS IF I WAS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL, ESSENTIALLY I AM WORKING DRUNK!
5. IN THIS DAY AND AGE WHEN I AND MY CO-WORKERS ARE REQUIRED TO BE EVER VIGILANT, I FIND WE ARE NOT.
6. I FORGET THE EASIEST OF TASKS, INCLUDING ARMING MY DOORS FOR TKOF AND GIVING SAFETY BRIEFINGS TO PAX ON AN EXIT ROW.
7. WE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE AWARE OF SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR AND ACTIONS FROM PAX, BUT WE ARE NOT.
8. WE ARE TOO FATIGUED TO STUDY AND LOOK AND SCRUTINIZE PAX.
9. I AM **WRITING TO NASA** TO TELL YOU THAT FATIGUE IS A HUGE PROB THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED IMMEDIATELY.
10. THE TRAVELING PUBLIC IS NOT SAFE IN OUR HANDS.
11. WE ARE NOT SAFE IN OUR OWN HANDS.
12. CREW FATIGUE IS SO WIDESPREAD, IT IS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE AN ACCIDENT OR SERIOUS INJURY OCCURS BECAUSE OF TIRED FLT ATTENDANTS.
13. I HOPE **NASA** UNDERSTANDS HOW IMPORTANT PROPER CREW REST IS, AND CAN/WILL PUT PRESSURE ON THE FAA TO INCREASE FAA MINIMUM CREW LAYOVER GUIDELINES.

Line 1 refers to the institutional authority of the FAA to set minimum layover times for flight attendants. Airlines must comply with these minimum layover times; however, many flight attendants are concerned that the FAA-mandated minimum layover is too short for crews to get sufficient rest, owing to several factors out of the control of flight attendants such as waiting time for hotel transportation to arrive at the airport, distance between airport and layover hotel, possible waiting time at the hotel to get assigned rooms, etc. Using the word *letter* for what is actually an institutional piece of correspondence could suggest that the reporter is attempting to reframe the institutional genre of incident report to something more personal at the same time it addresses something legalistic. Line 2 begins to describe these layover-related concerns, using occupationally related phrases such as *flying current sequences* (compare with ‘on a trip’) which index a professional stance. The phrase *10-13 hrs on duty* calls attention to the

length of time flight attendants are working in contrast with the *8 hr layovers* mentioned prior. Line 3 describes occupational safety practices which are non-physical and perhaps less visibly recognised than other flight attendant occupational practices mentioned in Line 6 (*arming my doors for [takeoff] and giving safety briefings to [passengers] on an exit row*).

Line 4 works to demonstrate to the primary audience to the distress that the FA reporter is feeling. Equating the fatigue – which the FA reporter argues is related to institutionally mandated minimum rest times – with the state of intoxication speaks to the gravity of the situation. Drinking on the job is forbidden for inflight crewmembers; flight attendants are subject to random alcohol and drug tests before and after flights to assure that they are not drinking whilst working. Therefore, the FA reporter underscores how serious the problem of flight attendant fatigue is by equating it to a state of being which is forbidden for working flight attendants. The aviation institutional ban on working whilst intoxicated applies to all employees thus the primary audience of the safety reports is aware of these restrictions and the penalties for violating them.

Line 5 calls attention to the increased aviation securities duties done by flight attendants and alludes to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 (i.e., 9/11), when four aircraft were hijacked and crashed. This attack resulted in several changes and enhancements to aviation security practices, including expanding the CRM tenet of situational awareness (see Chapter 3) to include detecting potential passenger security risks (e.g., hijackers, terrorists). Line 6 works to remind the primary audience that flight attendants have many safety-related duties for which they need to be well-rested in order to work at their best and be most alert. Referring to the fundamental safety-related flight attendant duties of door responsibility and cabin safety as *the easiest of tasks* implies that for the FA reporter, inflight security tasks are more mentally fatiguing and difficult than the physical tasks which flight attendants have been doing since before the increased security tasks imposed after 9/11. Lines 7 and 8 demonstrate to the primary audience both what these post-9/11 security tasks involve and that the FA reporter is aware of these tasks.

Similar to Line 1, Line 9 works to reframe an institutional speech event into a more personal genre of communication such as a letter, indicated by the phrase *I am writing to NASA to tell you*. While it is true that the FA reporter is literally *writing to NASA*, it is unusual for an incident report of this nature to cite the act of writing the report and to the institutional body to which it is submitted. Line 9 constructs *NASA* as an individual to whom the FA reporter can write with concern, as opposed to an institution

(subdivided into many departments and staffed by many individuals) to which the FA reporter reports an incident. This construction builds on the reframing in Line 1 of the institutional speech event of safety report into a more personal type of communication (i.e., *letter*).

In Lines 10 and 11, the reporter uses a repetitive rhetorical device to underscore how they feel the fatigue is affecting flight attendants in their ability to contribute to aviation safety. Note that Line 10 uses passengers as a resource to strengthen the FA reporter's assertion (discussed in Section 4.2, above). Line 12 demonstrates the safety responsibilities that flight attendants have in linking the potential for *an accident or serious injury* with *tired [flight] attendants*. Use of the word *accident* in Line 12 contrasts with the incident report that the FA reporter is submitting. Line 13 positions the institution *NASA* as having sufficient power over the FAA to influence institutional practices which negatively affect the FA reporter, and consequently potentially negatively affect aviation safety and security. Similar to Line 9, Line 13 shows NASA as a metonymic individual: *I hope NASA understands how important proper crew rest is, and can/will put pressure on the FAA to increase FAA minimum crew layover guidelines*. The use of institutionally salient phrases such as *crew rest* (compare with 'time off from flying') and *FAA minimum crew layover guidelines* works to construct the FA reporter as focused primarily on aviation safety.

In this example, there is not a specific incident being reported; it is an institutional practice (i.e., airlines scheduling only the FAA-mandated minimum rest to cabin crew) which the FA reporter is framing as a 'what if' type of report; this discourse practice is discussed in Section 4.1. Moreover, the FA reporter emphasises how aviation safety and security are being negatively affected by the fatigue which they feel is caused by the short layover times. Highlighting these negative effects instead of, for example, how customer service could be potentially affected by flight attendant fatigue, demonstrates that the FA reporter understands and is aware of the primary audience. Linking inflight safety with the contrasting lengths of time that flight attendants are on and off duty also works to draw attention away from non-occupational reasons that flight attendants may have for desiring increased layover time. Time away from the aircraft means time away from the demands of passenger service; longer layovers usually equate to more personal time in which flight attendants may engage in leisure activities. Yet citing the perceived effects of the FAA-mandated minimum layover time on institutional and occupational safety duties which flight attendants carry out (in Lines 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8) foregrounds these practices to the primary audience of ASRS analysts.

Example 4.14 draws on the institutional authority of the FAA to support the FA reporter's assertion of the minimum crew rule. Example 4.15 draws on the institutional authority of NASA in the request for increasing FAA-mandated minimum layover times. Both of these examples have constructed the FA reporter as capable and knowledgeable of occupational and institutional safety practices, and have used the resource of institutional authority to support or enhance their assertions. Example 4.16 offers another use of institutional authority in this report about FAA-approved seats for infants.

Example 4.16

792031 (2008-05)

1. I NOTICED AN INFANT SEATED IN XE TRAVELING WITH HIS PARENTS IN XD AND XF.
2. THE INFANT DID NOT HAVE A SEAT -- HE WAS ORIGINALLY ON HIS MOTHER'S LAP.
3. THEN AFTER PAX SWITCHED SEATS, THE PARENTS SAT IN XD AND XF AND SEATED THEIR INFANT SON BTWN THEM AND PROCEEDED TO USE THEIR FAA APPROVED CRS/ACSD DEVICE AND FASTENED THEIR SON INTO THE DEVICE IN THE SEAT.
4. WHEN I SAW THIS, MY FIRST GUT INSTINCT TOLD ME THAT THIS INFANT WAS WAY TOO SMALL FOR THIS DEVICE.
5. I HAD TO TAKE A SECOND LOOK.
6. I ASKED HIS MOTHER HIS AGE AND SHE RESPONDED THAT HE WAS SOMETHING LIKE 15-18 MONTHS.
7. I KNOW THAT WHEN THIS DEVICE WAS FIRST INTRODUCED, THE AGE REQUIREMENTS STIPULATED IT WAS DESIGNED FOR CHILDREN BTWN 2-4 YRS OF AGE AND THEY HAD TO WEIGH 22-44 LBS.
8. I COULD TELL THAT THIS INFANT DIDN'T WEIGH 22 LBS, NO WAY.
9. SO I WENT BACK TO MY MANUAL AND RESEARCHED THIS.
10. ACCORDING TO THE FAA AND ACR, A CHILD AS YOUNG AS 1 YR OF AGE CAN USE THIS DEVICE AS LONG AS THEY CAN SIT UPRIGHT UNASSISTED.
11. WHO COMES UP WITH THIS STUFF?
12. I'M SHOCKED.
13. THE INFANT ON MY AIRPLANE COULD NOT HOLD UP HIS HEAD, SHOULDERS, OR NECK.
14. IF OUR ACFT ENCOUNTERED UNEXPECTED CHOP AND TURB ENRTE, THIS LITTLE BOY COULD HAVE SUFFERED A SERIOUS INJURY.

Line 1 displays the CRM practice of situational awareness: the FA reporter *noticed an infant seated in [seat] travelling with his parents*. The FA reporter assigns a gender to the gender-neutral depersonalised word *infant*, a default baby boy. Line 2 demonstrates occupational safety knowledge. In the US, infants under a certain age must be carried on an adult's lap during certain phases of flight (e.g., takeoff and landing). During the cruise phase of a flight, infants meeting FAA-regulated size requirements are allowed to be in FAA-approved travel seats. Infants not meeting the size requirements must remain on adult laps (or lay on cabin seats). Line 3 refers to the institutional authority of the FAA to

regulate devices that can be used on aircraft as seats for infants. The purpose of FAA-approved infant seats is to provide infants adequate head and neck support, and maintain consistency in the quality of the support which the infant seat can provide. The phrase *proceeded to use their FAA approved CRS/ACSD device and fastened their son into the device in the seat* demonstrates occupationally specific lexical and syntactic construction which are strongly associated with the aviation industry.

Line 4 constructs the FA reporter as having learned the Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) for infant seats to the extent that the reporter's reaction is a *gut instinct*, instead of, for example, a thought or reaction. The use of the words *infant* and *device*, which are associated with institutional communications (e.g., FA manual, FARs; cf. NWA 1999), contribute to the construction of the FA reporter as a professional who is concerned about the safety of all passengers, especially those who are too small to look after themselves. This construction of the FA reporter contrasts with the construction of the infant's mother in Line 6 as someone not knowing exactly how old her child is (*something like 15-18 months*). Line 7 continues the contrast between the infant's mother and FA reporter and frames the knowledge the reporter has gained through experience as a flight attendant as something which holds similar authority as an FAR. The reporter assumes a footing of safety expert, citing the requirements for FAA-approved infant seats using words and phrases strongly associated with institutional communications (e.g., FA manual, FARs) and related occupational safety practices (compare *when this device was first introduced, the age requirements stipulated* with 'when this seat first came out, you had to be at least two to use it').

Line 8 contains language which is perhaps associated more with casual talk than with institutional communications or practices (*no way*). Like Line 4, Line 8 constructs the FA reporter as having learned occupational and institutional safety practices to the extent that the flight attendant is capable of making assessments about the suitability of infants for FAA-approved seats merely by vision. The tag *no way* works to underscore the assertion. Line 9 demonstrates occupational knowledge of the FA manual as an institutionally sanctioned resource upon which to draw for support or guidance in making authoritative decisions that can impact safety on the aircraft. Line 9 also displays the occupational practice of consulting the FA manual when in doubt about institutionally approved safety practices.

Line 10 contradicts the FA reporter's previous assertion in Lines 3 and 7. The word *child*, used here for the first time in the report and which contrasts with the repeated uses of *infant*, is associated with institutional communications (e.g., FA manual, FARs).

The reporter cites the source of the (correct) criteria as the FAA and the airline for which the FA reporter works (*ACR*). Lines 11 and 12 mark a frame shift, whereby the reporter shifts footing from that of safety authority to that of surprised commentator external to the participation framework. As a working flight attendant, the reporter is expected to be knowledgeable about current FARs. Yet when the reporter consulted their manual, they discovered their earlier assertion in Line 7 was incorrect. Thus, the FA reporter shifts footing, stating that they are *shocked* by the current regulation, and rhetorically asking *who comes up with this stuff* when the FA reporter is clearly aware that it is the FAA who devises and implements safety regulations concerning commercial aviation in the US. It can be argued that Lines 11 and 12 work to mitigate the impact of the incorrect assertion in Line 7, earlier. In calling attention to the age of the infant who is allowed to use such a device, the FA reporter is constructed as concerned for the safety of helpless infants, instead of merely being incorrect about the current FAR regarding infant seats. Line 13 continues this mitigating effect by drawing attention to the physical condition of the infant who was expected to sit upright, alone, in such a device. Line 14 uses the ‘what if’ strategy discussed in Section 4.1.

The reporter in Example 4.16 disagrees with the FAA and criticises the infant seat use criteria. However, there is no mitigation of the institutional authority of the FAA to mandate such devices, which demonstrates how embedded the orientation to the institutional authority of the FAA is within commercial aviation. The reporter instead notes the position of the FAA as one of the dominant institutional authorities in the commercial aviation industry (Line 10). The reporter then shifts footing to an alignment away from the FAA, as an advocate for the helpless infant.

Section summary

Citing institutional authorities in reports demonstrates the reporters’ knowledge of occupational practices as well as the privileged position of these authorities in the commercial aviation industry. Despite some practices which are questioned as unsafe (as in Example 4.16), flight attendants nonetheless conform to institutional guidelines and regulations. Using discourse which is associated with institutional communications and occupational practices (e.g., *staffing is at minimum*, Example 4.14, Line 3; *when flying current sequences*, Example 4.15, Line 2; *the age requirements stipulated*, Example 4.16, Line 7) creates indexical stances of safety-related professionalism.

Example 4.14-4.16 also contain discourse which does not describe safety practices, but instead draws on the reporters’ knowledge of safety practices to criticise

institutionally imposed regulations. The discourse used in part for these critiques is in a markedly different key than much of the surrounding text, which calls attention to the respective issues the reporters are citing. In Example 4.14 the FA reporter cites the discrepancy between the FAA inspector and the (FAA-approved) flight attendant manual (Line 7, *Without us having ESP, how would we know if it an [emergency] issue when the phone rings?*). Example 4.15 cites the inadequacy of FAA-mandated minimum rest times to alleviate fatigue which the FA reporter compares with the occupational taboo of working whilst intoxicated (Line 4, *essentially I am working drunk!*). Example 4.16 shows the reporter as critical about the FAA-regulated criteria for infant seats (Lines 11 and 12, *Who comes up with this stuff? I'm shocked*). Discourse surrounding each of these lines contains institutionally and occupationally sanctioned linguistic practices (e.g., words associated with the aviation industry; description of safety practices). Thus the differences in key work to construct these FA reporters as not mere automatons whose reports reproduce occupational and institutional safety-related practices and linguistic routines, but instead as well-trained professionals who at times have the confidence to question institutionally mandated practices and regulations.

4.5 Institutional practice and performance: *We landed without incident*

With each flight they work, flight attendants put into practice occupational and institutional norms such as working together as a team (a tenet of Crew Resource Management), hyperawareness of inflight safety (discussed in Section 4.1), and orienting to the institutional authority of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to regulate safety-related actions and behaviours in the aircraft cabin. These occupational norms are made salient through repeated practice. This salience is reproduced in the terms of reference and discursive routines of the reports.

As noted earlier, while there are many important occupational norms in commercial aviation, perhaps the most crucial is safety with respect to passengers, crew, and the aircraft itself. There is a great deal of value placed by institutions such as airlines and the FAA on flights operating ‘without incident’. The ideal flight has a routine takeoff, cruise, and landing, during which nothing of note happens. Airlines are vigilant about their safety records; they work hard to maintain the perception, based in fact, that air travel is safe. All commercial aviation employees contribute to this safety record in part through the work they do to prevent accidents and incidents. For flight attendants, as noted throughout this chapter, safety is emphasised through repeated practice at mandatory yearly training sessions, the emphasis on safety during initial training, and the

requirement to carry with them at work their flight attendant operations manual, the majority of contents related to safety, security, and emergency operations.

I have argued elsewhere (Clark 2010) that submission of the safety reports constitutes a discursive performance of safety, following Bucholtz and Hall's (2004: 380-381) definition of performance. Firstly, the reports are voluntarily submitted. There is no requirement by the FAA or an airline employer to submit an incident report. Therefore, those flight attendants who do submit incident reports to the ASRS do so out of their own free will. Secondly and following from the first point, the reports submitted by working flight attendants are in the minority, making them a marked speech event. Finally, the reports are written in order to have maximum impact owing to flight attendants' historical and institutional position of little power and authority compared with pilots (i.e., their fellow inflight crewmembers).

In this section I would like to explore this argument further, concentrating on the use of the phrase *we landed without incident* (*WLWI*). This phrase (and derivations, e.g., 'Landed safely'; 'Landed without further incident') appears in 27 of the 150 reports in my corpus (approximately 18%). There are at least two interesting things about the use of this phrase in the safety reports:

1. Its use by flight attendants and pilots. The phrase (and derivations) appears in reports submitted by pilots at a ratio of seven to one: results of a search in the online database using the parameter 'we landed without incident' yielded 711 reports submitted by pilots and 113 reports submitted by flight attendants⁶. Unfortunately, the scope of this thesis does not include an analysis of *WLWI* in pilot-submitted reports compared with flight attendant-submitted reports; however, this is an area for future research.
2. The use of the phrase in incident reports. The reports are being submitted *because* of an incident. To say *WLWI* is factually incorrect, yet 18% of the reports in my corpus assert in their inflight incident report that they 'landed without incident'.

One interpretation of the phrase *we landed without incident* is literally to describe the landing of the flight. This use is tacit orientation to the aviation industry knowledge that landing is one of the most dangerous phases of flight – many accidents occur during landing (cf. PlaneCrashInfo.com 2012). Example 4.17 demonstrates this interpretation of *WLWI* in a report about the loss of hydraulics and resulting emergency landing:

⁶ ASRS Database search conducted 26 April 2011.

Example 4.17

600255 (2003-11)

1. AT APPROX XA30, CAPT NOTIFIED #1 FLT ATTENDANT OF A HYD LEAK ON ACFT L SIDE.
2. ALL INDICATORS SHOWED A TOTAL LOSS OF FLUID.
3. HE **DECLARED AN EMER** AND GAVE THE #1 FLT ATTENDANT THE INFO VIA INTERPHONE.
4. WHEN IT WAS CLR TO ME WHAT SHE WAS DOING, I WENT TO THE BACK OF THE ACFT TO GET THE OTHER FLT ATTENDANTS.
5. #1 FLT ATTENDANT THEN ADVISED US OF OUR SIT AND TO IMMEDIATELY START OUR 'CHKLIST' THAT WE HAD 20 MINS BEFORE LNDG IN ORD.
6. THE CAPT SAID THAT WE WOULD PROBABLY SMELL SOMETHING BURNING UPON LNDG AND TO BE VERY AWARE OF FIRE.
7. WE WERE NOT TO USE ANY L-HAND SIDE EXITS.
8. WE BEGAN THE CHKLIST AND GOT AS FAR AS THE BRIEFING TO ASSIST.
9. SINCE I WAS THE #3 FLT ATTENDANT, I WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE WHILE ON THE JUMPSEAT.
10. THE FLT **LANDED WITHOUT INCIDENT.**

There are several descriptions of occupational practices, including linguistic practices, in this example. Throughout the report, the FA reporter uses the appropriate and approved occupational titles for the inflight crew: *Capt* (captain), *#1 flt attendant*, *#3 flt attendant*. Line 1 uses the term *aircraft left side*, which is aviation jargon. Line 2 reproduces something that would have been told to the reporter, as the *indicators* are located in the flight deck and therefore the reporter would not have had access to them during the incident. Line 3 states that the captain *declared an emergency*, displaying the captain's authority as head of the Chain of Command. Line 4 describes the FA reporter working with other crewmembers as a team and informing them of the current situation, tenets of Crew Resource Management (CRM).

Line 5 notes that the crew had 20 minutes before landing in Chicago which is a contextualization cue signaling the urgency of the situation: the flight attendants have only 20 minutes to carry out their emergency landing preparation duties. Twenty minutes to prepare for an emergency landing is not a lot of time, as there are a number of tasks which need to be accomplished in that time, such as identify, reseal, and brief able-bodied passengers (ABPs) to assist with evacuation if necessary; brief all passengers as to emergency landing and evacuation procedures; verify all service equipment is securely stored and all compartments are securely closed; to name but a few tasks. The urgency is signaled by the word *immediately* in Line 5.

Lines 6 and 7 display the authority of the captain as the head of the Chain of Command, constructing him as in control of the situation, knowledgeable about the

potential consequences of the loss of hydraulic controls, and conforming to the CRM tenet of keeping crewmembers informed. Lines 8 and 9 describe the safety-related tasks carried out by the cabin crew, with Line 9 demonstrating occupational knowledge of the position of the FA reporter's jumpseat relative to passenger seats in the aircraft. Ostensibly the reporter should have used the time before landing to mentally prepare themselves for the emergency landing, yet Line 9 constructs them as continuing passenger-related safety duties.

The report ends by asserting *The flt landed without incident*. Yet in Line 1 the flight attendant reports that the *capt notified #1 flt attendant of a [hydraulic] leak* which resulted in *a total loss of fluid* (Line 2), and therefore a loss of a great deal of control of the aircraft. Example 4.17 provides an example of the literal interpretation of *we landed without incident*: despite loss of hydraulics, the pilots managed to land safely with no loss of life.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004: 380) argue that performance differs from practice in that performance is a 'highly deliberate and self-aware social display'. In Example 4.17, the FA reporter has included many details which emphasise their role in aviation safety, especially their role in the safe landing without incident of the flight. The report describes the safety-focused tasks that the cabin crew are carrying out, including the briefing of potential ABPs whilst the FA reporter was on their jumpseat during the final moments before the landing. This consistent description of safety-related tasks is due to the primary audience who are not flight attendants. Thus explicit reconstruction of safety-related duties works to remind the primary audience that flight attendants have a vital role in maintaining aircraft and especially passenger safety during inflight emergencies and non-routine events. The result of this explicit and consistent orientation to occupational and institutional safety-related practices is a performance of safety. Example 4.9 (discussed in Section 4.3) provides another example of this interpretation of *we landed without incident*.

I would argue that there is a second interpretation of *we landed without incident*. Flight attendant use of *WLWI* in the reports works to borrow prestige from pilots, and is an attempt to mitigate the distinct power and institutional authority differences between flight attendants and pilots. Some of these differences are discussed in Chapter 3; below is a brief discussion of other salient differences.

Flight attendants have authority vested in them by institutions such as airlines and the FAA, but they do not make the rules they must enforce. They also cannot make decisions on the scale that pilots can (e.g., decisions which affect passengers and crew

such as deciding to turn the aircraft around whilst inflight and return to a departure airport). Flight attendants are frequently affected by decisions made by pilots in which flight attendants themselves have no input.

Flight attendants receive between four and eight weeks of primarily safety and security-related training, yet pilots train for years to gain the experience to fly for a major commercial airline. Flight attendants acquire much of their occupational service knowledge through experience on the job. While this makes them no less competent at their respective jobs than pilots, there is a constant, though low-level, stigma that flight attendants are somehow not competent professionals for many reasons (cf. Chute and Weiner 1996): a university degree is not required to be hired as a flight attendant; the flight attendant job requires fewer technical skills and more emotional labour skills (Hochschild 2003); tasks that the flying public witnesses flight attendants doing appear to be easily learned by most people, to name but a few.

Finally, as outlined in Chapter 3, stereotypes of the flight attendant and pilot occupations based in sociohistoric realities comprise part of the context in which flight attendants work and communicate. One of the most pervasive stereotypes is that of the pilot as omnipotent father figure (Ashcraft 2007). Accompanying this pilot stereotype is the flight attendant as passive, obedient child, or doting, obedient housewife (Barry 2007). Both of these flight attendant stereotypes are unflattering, and portray the flight attendant as subservient to the pilot, and the pilot as more knowledgeable than the flight attendant, conjuring images of the 'Father Knows Best' heteronormative family dynamic (cf. Ochs and Taylor 1995).

These factors contribute to power and authority inequalities between flight attendants and pilots, which can affect flight attendants. Especially in emergency landing situations when they are not kept informed by pilots according to CRM tenets, flight attendants can feel they are unequal parts of the inflight 'team'. This power/authority imbalance and subsequent use of *we landed without incident* can be seen in Example 4.18:

Example 4.18

583175 (2003-04)

1. I WAS SITTING IN 4R JUMP SEAT AWAITING THE 2ND CHIME WHEN A LOUD METALLIC CLANG SOUND OCCURRED.
2. I LOOKED AT THE #2 FLT ATTENDANT, AND ASKED 'WHAT WAS THAT?'
3. A FEW MOMENTS LATER THERE WAS A POPPING SOUND, FOLLOWED BY A STALLED R ENG.
4. I SAID TO THE #2 FLT ATTENDANT WE HAVE LOST THE R ENG?

5. THE PLANE LOST ALT BRIEFLY AND THEN REGAINED.
6. THE #1 FLT ATTENDANT CALLED AND ASKED IF WE WERE OK?
7. WHILE WE WERE ON THE INTERCOM OUR CAPT CAME ON THE INTERCOM AND TOLD US (FLT ATTENDANTS) WE WERE RETURNING TO MAKE LNDG DUE TO A R ENG PROB.
8. WE WERE STILL IN JUMP SEATS WHEN A CALL LIGHT CAME ON.
9. #2 FLT ATTENDANT AND I WENT TO SEE WHAT THE YOUNG LADY NEEDED.
10. SHE WAS PALE AND NAUSEATED.
11. WE PLACED COLD TOWELS AND PLACED THE AIR VENT ON HER.
12. ALSO GAVE HER A BAG IF SHE NEEDED IT.
13. THE YOUNG LADY'S COLOR CAME BACK TO NORMAL AND WE RETURNED TO OUR JUMP SEATS AFTER DOING A SAFETY CHKS.
14. CAPT ANNOUNCED OVER THE PA SYS THAT WE WERE RETURNING TO LAND.
15. WE HAD LIKELY TAKEN IN A 'BIRD' IN THE R ENG.
16. HE STATED NOT TO BE ALARMED TO SEE FIRE TRUCKS AND EMER VEHICLES UPON LNDG.
17. **WE LANDED SAFELY AND TAXIED TO THE GATE WITHOUT INCIDENT.**
18. ALL PAX LEFT BY THE JET BRIDGE.
19. PERCEPTIONS: I FEEL THAT IT WAS NOT A BIRD, BUT SOMETHING OF A METALLIC NATURE THAT HIT THE R ENG.
20. I WAS UNAWARE OF ANY FIRE OR SMOKE AT ANY TIME.
21. ONLY AFTER LNDG WAS I MADE AWARE THERE WAS A FIRE IN THE R ENG.
22. A PAX (A MAN WHO WROTE FOR PAINTED HORSES MAGAZINE) TOLD ME HE KNEW WE WERE IN REAL TROUBLE WHEN HE SAW THE R ENG ON FIRE.
23. 3 SVC MGRS MET OUR PLANE TO CHK ON US, AND THEY ALSO INFORMED US THAT SOMEONE ON THE GND (I BELIEVE ANOTHER FLT ATTENDANT HAD WITNESSED THE FLAMES FROM THE R ENG).

Lines 1-6 construct the FA reporter as aware of the surroundings, including abnormal sounds in the cabin. Line 7 demonstrates the institutional authority of the captain as the head of the Chain of Command, and his ability to make decisions that affect flight attendants (who are usually not consulted before such decisions are made). Lines 8-13 mark a frame shift, from mechanical incident to passenger care. The frame shift in Line 8 from concern of the safety of all passengers and crew, to the comfort of an individual passenger, offers discursive evidence of the ingrained day-to-day practices associated with the flight attendant job. The reporter does not call attention to the passenger taking ill apart from noting it in the report, and stating the activities done by flight attendants to alleviate the passenger's discomfort. Line 14 shifts frame to focus on the emergency landing, with Line 16 noting the potential danger of the situation.

Line 19 marks another frame shift, away from the occupational tasks and institutional interactional norms described in the preceding lines, and focusing on the FA reporter's personal feelings and assertions. The reporter's footing appears to shift, from acceptance of their role in the Chain of Command hierarchy and following the captain's commands seemingly without question, to disagreeing with the captain's assessment of the cause of the engine trouble, which could be interpreted as questioning the captain's authority.

Lines 20-21 introduce the possibility of a fire in the engine, a potentially serious incident that might necessitate an emergency evacuation. The use and repetition of the words *fire*, *smoke*, and *flames* in Lines 20-23 emphasise the dangerous situation the FA reporter believed they were in. Line 20 constructs the reporter as *unaware* of this potentially dangerous situation. In Line 22 the reporter draws on the authority of a passenger witness to support their assertion that there had been a fire in the engine, of which they was not informed. The FA reporter enhances the credibility of the assertion by referring to the passenger's occupation; presumably a writer would provide an honest, truthful, reliable assessment of the situation (although this is a cultural assumption that bears critique). The reporter's assertion is further supported in Line 23 by drawing on the institutional authority of three service managers to support the reporter's assertion of the existence of an engine fire.

The captain informed the cabin crew of his assessment of the cause of the engine problem; he also made the decision to return to land. The captain is therefore positioned as capable, knowledgeable, and in command of the aircraft, which is in keeping with the captain's role as head of the Chain of Command and having authority over the aircraft, passengers, and crew. Yet in Line 22, the FA reporter appears to align with the passenger (*a man who wrote for Painted Horses magazine*) and away from the captain. While the report does not state that the captain withheld information from the cabin crew, it is implied in the shifts in footing and alignment in Lines 19-23. Instead of constructing the cabin crew and pilots as a united inflight 'team', the FA reporter emphasises the participation in the incident of persons outside of the inflight crew (the passenger in Line 22, the three service managers and flight attendant on the ground in Line 23). Equally telling are the reported interactions between cabin crew and pilot, in Lines 7 and 14-16. The captain is presented as telling the FA reporter that they were experiencing a right engine problem, had likely taken a bird into the engine, and there may be fire trucks and other emergency vehicles. One could infer that fire may be present, yet the captain never states that there is or may be a fire in the right engine.

It is unclear why the FA reporter feels that the captain was being less than forthcoming. However, the result of the shifts in footing and alignment is that the authority and knowledge of the captain are mitigated. Instead of accepting the captain's assessment of the situation based on his years of flying experience (which would have included experience with bird strikes in the engines and associated sounds), the FA reporter instead appears to link disagreement about the cause of engine trouble (Line 19) with not being informed about the engine fire (Line 20). For the FA reporter, then, the

captain did not keep the cabin crew informed of the situation, despite being informed of the presence of fire trucks (Line 16).

The FA reporter is presented as concerned about inflight safety in Lines 1-6, and concerned about passenger comfort in the frame shift in Lines 8-13, the two primary duties of flight attendants. Thus the reporter is constructed as fulfilling institutional and occupational expectations; the reporter could have been as adequately prepared for an engine fire as s/he was for the passenger medical incident in Lines 8-13. Yet the FA reporter was unaware of the engine fire, and therefore was not able to take steps to prepare for an emergency evacuation or cabin fire (should the engine fire spread). The reporter had no input or part in the decision-making process and yet was affected by decisions made by the captain.

There is an implicit power difference between the captain and the FA reporter. I would argue that the inclusion of *we landed safely and taxied to the gate without incident* (Line 17) is a deliberate display of safety knowledge, and an attempt to mitigate this feeling of powerlessness. The FA reporter is able to reclaim some control of the situation by asserting the safe landing of the aircraft using a phrase associated with pilots and therefore borrowing institutional prestige. The inclusion of passenger information in Line 18 reinforces the FA reporter's awareness of and concern for passenger safety; thus Lines 17 and 18 further present the reporter as fulfilling both primary flight attendant duties. Note that the assertion of *we landed safely and taxied to the gate without incident* also works to communicate the literal safe landing and arrival of the aircraft. Thus, Example 4.18 provides a dual use of the phrase, which can also be seen in Example 4.19.

Example 4.19

700759 (2006-06)

1. MAINT PLACARDED APU INOP BEFORE FLT DEPARTED.
2. PLTS COULD NOT START ENG EVEN WITH AN AIRSTART.
3. FINALLY, WE LEFT GATE AND TOOK OFF.
4. I IMMEDIATELY SMELLED A BURNING SMELL, ELECTRICAL.
5. COCKPIT CALLED SAID COCKPIT WAS FULL OF SMOKE.
6. WE SAID THE CABIN ALSO WAS FULL OF SMOKE.
7. **WE LANDED SAFELY WITH NO INCIDENT.**
8. THIS IS MY THIRD EMER LNDG IN THE LAST YEAR PLUS OTHER PROBS WITH THIS FLEET TYPE.
9. I DO NOT FEEL SAFE ON ACR PLANES ANYMORE.
10. I DON'T TRUST THE MAINT.
11. I HOPE THEY ARE NOT CUTTING BACK.
12. I HAVE BEEN HAVING PANIC ATTACKS DUE TO THESE EVENTS.

Lines 1-7 describe safety-related practices and aviation discursive practices. For example, Line 1 uses the abbreviation *APU* to refer to the Auxiliary Power Unit, a power source used whilst the aircraft is on the ground and before engines are started. Additionally, the APU is needed to start the engines on some aircraft; if the APU is inoperative (*inop*, Line 1), then engines must be started using another device (*airstart*, Line 2). Lines 1 and 2 thus work to formulate the FA reporter as knowledgeable about the general workings of a jet aircraft and related commercial aviation practices. The presence of smoke in the aircraft is always a concern. Just as smoke is a theoretical index of fire, in the aircraft context, smoke can be and often is a real index of fire. An uncontrolled fire can destroy an aircraft in less than ten minutes (FAA 2004d: 6). Thus Line 4 displays occupational safety knowledge as well as the CRM tenet of situational awareness. Lines 5 and 6 construct the pilots and flight attendants as keeping each other informed of the situation.

Similar to Example 4.18, a frame shift is apparent in Line 8 after the assertion *We landed safely with no incident*, from described safety-related facts (Lines 1-6), to focusing on the FA reporter's personal opinions and mental well-being. Line 10, *I don't trust the maintenance*, and Line 12, *I have been having panic attacks due to these incidents*, especially note the human experience of being in an onboard incident. This description of the impact of the emergency landings on the FA reporter demonstrates that irrespective of the repeated practices, even the flight attendants who carry out the routine, day-to-day practices which contribute to maintaining safety during flight are not immune to feeling the effects of an incident.

The frame shift in Lines 8-12 work to heighten the impact of the effects of the incident, and constructs the FA reporter as both a safety expert with experience in emergency landings (evidenced in Line 8), as well as a flesh-and-blood human being, vulnerable to injury and discomfort. The frame shift also increases the impact of the report: instead of reading merely a factual account of an onboard incident, the primary audience instead reads how such an incident impacts a human being who is also a professional flight attendant, trained to remain calm and carry out safety-related duties during such an incident. The FA reporter describes feeling unsafe on company aircraft, distrusting company maintenance staff, and having panic attacks.

Ostensibly pilots have more control in aircraft than flight attendants, as we saw in Example 4.18 (and other examples in this chapter). Pilots make decisions during flights that affect and impact flight attendants. Yet both groups of employees work in aircraft that are serviced and maintained by a third group of aviation employees: mechanics. Flight attendants do not carry out maintenance on the aircraft, yet must work in aircraft

that may or may not be safe or airworthy. Thus the lives of flight attendants are impacted by not only pilots, but also by aircraft mechanics. In Example 4.19, *we landed safely with no incident* works to mitigate the feelings of powerlessness and fear that the FA reporter is feeling as a result of the three emergency landings. The phrase provides borrowed institutional prestige from pilots as pilots have greater power and institutional authority than flight attendants in commercial aviation. Use of the phrase works to communicate to the primary audience that the reporter is a professional flight attendant who has the occupational experience and knowledge to work competently during such a dangerous and frightening incident, despite the personal cost to the FA reporter.

Thus far, I have argued that *we landed without incident* has a dual interpretation. It can communicate literally that the flight landed routinely, thus demonstrating occupational and institutional safety practices (seen in Example 4.17). It also works to mitigate power and authority inequalities between flight attendants and other aviation occupations (pilots in Example 4.18, mechanics in 4.19). Both interpretations construct the flight attendant reporter as a competent, professional safety worker by borrowing institutional prestige from pilots through the use of the phrase that is associated with pilots and their occupational knowledge and experience to make such an assessment.

Example 4.20 is the final example in this section and provides a robust demonstration of the power that pilots have over flight attendants. Despite its length, I have included the full report here as reading it in its entirety allows understanding of the impact which I would argue the reporter is attempting to communicate to the primary audience:

Example 4.20

673937 (2005-10)

1. THERE WERE SEVERE STORMS IN MSP LAST NIGHT.
2. WHEN WE ARRIVED, I ASKED THE CAPT TO CHK TO SEE IF WE WERE GOING TO BE DELAYED AT ALL BEFORE WE STARTED THE BOARDING PROCESS.
3. I WAS INFORMED THAT WE WOULD BOARD AS NORMAL.
4. BOARDING [STARTED] AT XA40.
5. WE SAT AT THE GATE WITH THE JETWAY ATTACHED TO THE ACFT FOR 2 HRS.
6. AT XC25, THE JETWAY WAS PULLED.
7. WE CONTINUED TO SIT AT THE GATE.
8. WE HAD MULTIPLE CONNECTIONS DOWNLINE IN ORD AND THE PAX KNEW THAT THEY WOULD NOT MAKE IT.
9. PAX ASKED THAT THE JETWAY BE BROUGHT BACK AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO DEPLANE AND GO HOME.
10. WE WERE TOLD THAT THIS WAS GOING TO HAPPEN.
11. 1 HR LATER, WE WERE TOLD THAT THE JETWAY WOULD NOT BE COMING BACK.

12. AFTER INSISTING TO THE CAPT THAT THE JETWAY COME BACK, I WAS TOLD 'THERE IS A RAMP CLOSURE AND WE WOULD NOT GET THE JETWAY UNTIL THE RAMP OPENS.'
13. WE SAT THERE FOR YET ANOTHER HR.
14. BY THIS TIME THE PAX STARTED BECOMING IRATE AND WANTED OFF THE ACFT.
15. I WAS ASKED BY THE CAPT, 'IF WE BRING THE JETWAY BACK, WILL YOU FLT ATTENDANTS BE WALKING, BECAUSE WE KNOW YOU ARE ILLEGAL TO WORK THIS TRIP?'
16. I ASKED HIM, 'WHAT KIND OF QUESTION IS THAT?'
17. HE THEN SAID, 'THE JETWAY WILL NOT BE COMING BACK UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES BECAUSE ONCE IT DOES, YOU ARE ILLEGAL TO WORK THIS TRIP.'
18. THE STATION OPS ALONG WITH THE CAPT DECIDED TO PUT 4000 LBS MORE FUEL ON THE ACFT AND WE WERE GOING TO ORD.
19. WE BROUGHT PEOPLE TO ORD WHO DIDN'T WANT TO COME TO ORD AND LEFT THEM STRANDED WITH NO RECOURSE.
20. I UNDERSTAND THAT WE WOULD HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL TO WORK IF THEY BROUGHT THE JETWAY BACK, BUT WHY BRING PEOPLE TO A CITY THAT THEY DON'T WANT TO BE IN?
21. FLT ATTENDANTS WERE BACKED INTO A CORNER WITH OUR HANDS TIED BEHIND OUR BACKS WITH NO SAY IN WHAT WE WANTED TO DO.
22. THE PAX ATTITUDES STARTED TO ESCALATE INTO THREAT LEVELS, NONE WAS DECLARED, AND WE AS FLT ATTENDANTS HAD TO DEAL WITH ALL THE RECOURSE AS THE PLTS REFUSED TO COME OUT OF THE COCKPIT OR EVEN TRULY EXPLAIN TO THE PAX WHAT THE TRUE STORY WAS (CREW LEGALITIES).
23. THERE WAS A MAJOR LACK IN SUPPORT FOR THE FLT ATTENDANTS AND THE CRM CHAIN BROKE DOWN TO NOTHING -- ALL TO SAVE A FLT FROM CANCELING.
24. **WE ARRIVED IN ORD WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT.**

To summarise the report, departure from Minneapolis/St Paul airport (*MSP*) to Chicago O'Hare airport (*ORD*) was delayed due to weather. Sitting at the gate with the aircraft door closed ate into cabin crew duty time. Passengers eventually wanted off the aircraft, realising they would miss connections in Chicago. Due to the delay in departure using up duty time, flight attendants were not legal to work the flight in its entirety. Pilots are constructed as the motivation behind the operation of the flight, despite passenger wishes (and later demands) and flight attendant legalities. Pilots are also constructed as failing to do their occupational and institutional duties relating to safety.

Flight attendants are constructed as primarily carrying out their occupational duties of passenger service. The FA reporter first notes the effect of the delay on passengers, not on the cabin crew, in Lines 8 and 9. Use of the word *asked* (instead of 'demanded', for example) by the FA reporter in Line 9 indexes politeness; similarly, the subjective syntax of *they would like to deplane* is a pragmatic indication of a request as opposed to a demand. These lexical and syntactic markers of politeness contrast with the description of passengers in Line 14 as *becoming irate*. The passengers have gone from

asking to leave the plane, to saying they *wanted off* the aircraft, semantically a more hostile request than in Line 9. Additional evidence of passengers' increasing hostility is in Line 22, which presents the passengers' behaviour as reaching *threat levels*. The flight attendants are presented as having to *deal with all the recourse* of *irate* passengers who were taken to a city where they did not want to be (Line 19). Eventually passenger behaviour becomes threatening (Line 22); throughout the entire report, pilots are positioned as never interacting with passengers or responding to passenger concerns.

The FA reporter calls attention to the collective attitude and needs of the passengers during this flight, using passengers' needs as a resource for the FA reporter's assertions (discussed in Section 4.2). Not only were passengers affected by the actions of the captain; the cabin crew were made to work beyond their legal duty day. Yet the reporter first describes the concerns of the passengers. In fact, the reporter is only expressing concern for the cabin crew near the end of the report, in Line 21. Line 21 marks a temporary frame shift, displaying the powerlessness that the cabin crew felt: *Flt attendants were **backed into a corner** with our hands tied behind our backs with no say in what we wanted to do*. Line 22 returns to focusing on passenger needs and attitudes, with flight attendants being forced to interact and deal with irate passengers due to pilots' refusal to fulfil their occupational and institutionally mandated duties related to Crew Resource Management (CRM) tenets.

The FA reporter mentions the flight delay four times but it is not until Line 15 that the effect of these delays on the cabin crew is mentioned, via reported speech of the captain in Line 15. During the delay, the cabin crew's duty time was being used up so that when the flight would eventually depart, the flight attendants would run out of legal duty time and begin to work beyond what is legally allowed (known as going illegal⁷). In my experience, flight attendants are fastidious about calculating their duty time, knowing precisely the moment when they go illegal and can no longer work. If flight attendants go illegal in the air (during the flight), then they are not allowed to work the flight and the flight must cancel. Yet here the FA reporter sets up the captain as introducing this possibility. In this way, the reporter is presented as selfless, caring for the safety and comfort of the passengers, and never as the instigator of a potential cancellation due to crew legalities.

Previous research has demonstrated that the use of reported speech in narratives, particularly in online discourse, is related to status (Cheshire and Ziebland 2005;

⁷ FAR 121.467. Note that in the US, pilots do not have the authority to reschedule flight attendants, nor do they have the authority to disregard or violate an FAR.

Hamilton 1998). Reported speech was attributed more frequently to higher status speakers than relatively lower status speakers. Thus the reported speech in Lines 12, 15 and 17, attributed to the captain, accomplishes three things: 1) demonstration of the captain's higher status relative to flight attendants; 2) display of the power differentials between the captain and FA reporter; and 3) indication of the captain's greater authoritative position in the Chain of Command relative to the FA reporter.

The report does not indicate that the flight attendants explain the cause of the delay to the passengers. Implicit in this report is the expectation of the FA reporter that explanation of non-routine events such as the delay is the duty of the pilots. Many airlines do request (in fact some require) that the captain explain any delay or non-routine event to passengers within a certain amount of time. This expectation is in keeping with pilots' position above flight attendants in the Chain of Command. Higher position in the Chain of Command hierarchy brings with it greater occupational and institutional authority and responsibility. Explanation of this delay by flight attendants would likely not have had the institutional authority behind it that such an explanation from the captain would have.

Use of the phrase *we arrived in ORD without further incident* works to mitigate the powerlessness of the flight attendants against the pilots' actions. Despite all best efforts of flight attendants, the flight operated. Pilots' decision affected both passengers and flight attendants; both groups were powerless against the pilots' misuse of their institutional authority. *We arrived in ORD without further incident* asserts that there was an incident – confrontation between pilots and flight attendants – and the flight continued and landed in Chicago safely. We can infer that this safe landing was due primarily to the flight attendants who despite being forced to work beyond their legal duty limitations fulfilled their occupational and institutional safety-related expectations.

We arrived in ORD without further incident works to construct the flight attendants as authoritative in their own right. The phrase provides borrowed prestige from pilots' institutional authority. The FA reporter appropriates it, using it to support their assertion and give additional institutionally authoritative support to their words and actions. The result is that flight attendants are constructed as demonstrating their occupational duties of passenger care and their institutional expectations of complying with CRM tenets of obedience to the Chain of Command hierarchy. Pilots are constructed as being expected to explain to passengers the reasons for the delay, owing to their position in the Chain of Command hierarchy above flight attendants. This expectation contrasts with the construction of the pilots as fulfilling none of their institutional and occupational tasks and expectations.

Example 4.20 is a deliberate display of flight attendant occupational and institutional duties. The FA reporter is positioned as consistently working to manage passenger concerns and cabin safety; concern about flight attendant duty time and the potential of flight cancellation is placed in the reported speech of the captain. The explicit orientation to Crew Resource Management (*CRM*) in Line 23 works to remind the primary audience of the institutional expectations of all inflight crewmembers, and the consequences of noncompliance with these expectations. The flight attendant crew is positioned as so powerless that they were *backed into a corner with our hands tied behind our backs with no say in what we wanted to do* (Line 21), due to pilots' noncompliance with CRM tenets. Despite this breakdown in CRM, the flight landed without further incident, demonstrating the professionalism of the cabin crew. Despite being forced by the captain to work beyond their legal duty limits, they fulfilled their institutional and occupational expectations related to inflight safety and passenger care.

Section summary

We landed without incident borrows pilot prestige and enhances flight attendant assertions in the safety reports. Flight attendants do not have the knowledge, except for their lived experience in the cabin, to assert that a flight landed 'without incident'. They are not in control of the aircraft; they sit in the cabin and experience the same lack of control as passengers do. Pilots have control over the aircraft, with the captain having ultimate authority. Moreover, flight attendants do not have access to the flight deck or to information that would support an unequivocal assertion that *the flight landed without incident* as there could be an incident in the flight deck which the flight attendants were not aware of. Yet flight attendants are using this phrase in reports. The result is that the reports that contain *we landed without incident* offer additional support in the construction of flight attendants as safety experts.

4.6 Situated identity: Stances, ideologies, and performances

Throughout the chapter, I have demonstrated that the safety reports describe occupational and institutional practices, including discursive practices. In this section, I would like to discuss how these practices contribute to a situated identity construction. Figure 1.1 on page 19 in Chapter 1 provides a visualisation of the framework for situated identity construction set out by Bucholtz and Hall (2004). This section elaborates on the diagram, drawing from examples analysed in the chapter to demonstrate the construction of a

situated identity that emerges from the social semiotics of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance.

The emphasis of safety knowledge in the safety reports breaks down into three areas: 1) knowledge and awareness of the Crew Resource Management (CRM) tenet of working as a team (discussed in Chapter 3); 2) knowledge of safety-related training and expertise in putting this safety training into practice; and 3) knowledge of and adherence to the CRM tenet of the inflight hierarchy of the Chain of Command. All three areas foreground aviation safety practices by adhering to the training and procedures put in place by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). In addition to safety-related practices, the reports consistently describe occupational and institutional discursive practices, such as using specific terms and titles (e.g., *pax*, *captain*, *first officer/FO*, *#1 flt attendant*, *purser*, *galley*, airport codes, specific aircraft models) associated with commercial aviation.

These practices can be seen in Example 4.9, which constructs flight attendants and pilots as working together to ensure the safe outcome of the flight. The FA reporter adheres to the CRM tenet of keeping crewmembers informed of the situation, and notifies the *capt* and *FO* (Line 4) of the unusual noise *in the galley* (Line 1). The FA reporter is presented as having the occupational knowledge to recognise an unusual sound which could affect safety. The captain is positioned as having authority over the aircraft and crew and, owing to his position as head of the Chain of Command, makes the final decision to return to the departure airport.

These practices are used to create direct and indirect indexical stances. Occupational and institutional safety-related practices create direct indexical stances of safety, seriousness, professionalism, and authority. These can be seen in the phrase *we landed without incident* (discussed in Section 4.5). Use of the phrase directly indexes a stance of professionalism and concern for safety. *We landed without incident* is associated with and used by pilots, most of whom are male. The use of this definitive phrase in the reports is a form of borrowed prestige, whereby the phrase is invoked, despite evidence to the contrary, to index a professional, authoritative stance, associated with and similar to pilots.

Use of *we landed without incident* can also create indirect indexical stances of masculinity, due to the direct indexical stances of seriousness, professionalism, and authority that are created. As argued above, *we landed without incident* is associated with pilots who are higher than flight attendants in aviation hierarchy and power. The majority

of pilots are male⁸; thus using the phrase *we landed without incident* allows the flight attendant reporter to draw on (or borrow) the social and aviation institutional authority associated with being a commercial airline pilot.

Occupational practices of emotional labour and passenger caretaking can create direct indexical stances of nurturing. This stance can be seen in Example 4.18. Lines 9-13 describe passenger caretaking tasks, with the FA reporter constructing the unwell passenger as *the young lady* (Lines 9 and 13) instead of, for example, ‘the sick passenger’ or ‘the nauseated pax’. Compare use of *the young lady* in Example 4.18 with the more anonymous and degendered *pax* of Example 4.6. Example 4.16 refers to the *little boy* (Line 14) who appears too young for the FAA-approved seat in which his parents placed him.

Such indexical stances produce ideologies. I would argue that there are two primary ideologies distinct to commercial aviation that are produced. The first ideology is *safety*, which motivates a significant majority of flight attendant institutional and occupational tasks and expectations. Every report in this chapter (indeed, every report in my corpus) demonstrates awareness of the importance of aviation safety and the role that flight attendants play in it. The importance of safety in commercial aviation is reiterated in flight attendant training sessions, and reinforced in everything that flight attendants do during takeoff, landing, turbulence, and non-routine events.

The second ideology is the *Chain of Command*, which motivates and frames almost all occupational and institutional interaction between flight attendants and pilots. The Chain of Command dictates behaviour between flight attendants and pilots in routine and non-routine situations, with the position of the captain as head of the Chain of Command reinforced with every flight. Flight attendants are made aware and reminded of their positions in the Chain of Command during initial training, recurrent training, pre-flight safety briefings, and institutional communications from the FAA and airlines. It is impossible to disregard the influence of Chain of Command in commercial aviation. However, we have seen in some examples attempts to mitigate flight attendants’ position in the hierarchical structure, with flight attendants working to reframe the hierarchy by personalising it (Example 4.12) or by emphasising the failure of pilots to conform to CRM-related tasks such as keeping crewmembers informed (Example 4.13).

In Section 4.5, I argued that the safety reports are discursive performances of safety. This argument followed from the definition of performance as a ‘highly deliberate and self-aware social [displays]’ that are ‘marked speech events that are ... differentiated

⁸ Of the 120,865 licenced commercial pilots in the US in 2011, 7,956 are female (FAA 2012g).

from more mundane interaction' (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 380). Performance often involves stylization, which is 'the highlighting and exaggeration of ideological associations' (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 381). In other words, performances foreground practice and heighten ideologies. We have seen that the safety reports foreground occupational and institutional practices, including discursive practices. The safety reports also heighten the ideologies of safety and the Chain of Command.

Example 4.20 offers a performance of safety centering on flight attendant/pilot interaction, in which communication breaks down, tempers escalate, and the outcome is less than satisfactory for all participants except possibly the captain, who is constructed as not wanting the flight to cancel (Line 23, *all to save a flight from cancelling*). Example 4.20 heightens the ideology of the Chain of Command: the captain is the ultimate authority on the plane, something which is reinforced by everyday practice during routine flights. Thus, the participants in the incident (as well as in the participation framework of the incident report) are already aware of the institutional power instilled in the captain. Participants are also aware of CRM-related communicative expectations of the captain: instead of acting unilaterally, the captain should have consulted with the rest of the crew prior to making the decision to add more fuel and depart for Chicago after the four-hour delay. It is possible that such consultation of the inflight 'team' did happen; however, such interaction is not reported. Line 23 offers additional evidence for this violation of CRM: *There was a major lack in support for the flight attendants and the CRM chain broke down to nothing – all to save a flight from canceling*.

We can also look at Example 4.11 to see the social semiotics of identity construction framework in action. The report foregrounds occupational practices related to safety awareness: the FA reporter is concerned about the unusual presence of water in the cabin, and how it could possibly affect inflight safety and the airworthiness of the aircraft. The FA reporter reports the water to the captain, despite their concerns being dismissed by mechanics and the captain after reporting the presence of the water the previous day, thus foregrounding the institutional practice of the inflight hierarchy of the Chain of Command with the captain at the head. Moreover, the example constructs the captain as being proactive about searching for water damage (despite initially being *incredulous* about the water). What is striking about this construction of the captain is the contrast between his initial incredulity and the actions he eventually takes, deciding to *refuse the plane* and having *the panels pulled out*. The FA reporter even ascribes to the captain unknown motivations for his actions: *I'm sure he had other reasons only [pilots] know about*.

Until the final three lines of the report, the FA reporter is the one who is constructed as concerned about aircraft and passenger safety, with pilots constructed as dismissing concerns of the cabin crew. These constructions work to heighten both ideologies of safety and the Chain of Command. The FA reporter is consistently concerned about crew and passenger safety, as well as the airworthiness of the aircraft, yet their concerns are dismissed by the pilots of the first flight. The pilots are thus constructed as having the institutional authority and position to be able to dismiss such concerns, which heightens the Chain of Command ideology. Note that the FA reporter does not go over the head of the pilots after their concerns are dismissed. The actions of the pilots – dismissing the cabin crew's concerns and taking the plane irrespective of the presence of the water in the cabin – affect the FA reporter and the rest of the cabin crew, yet they do not attempt to mitigate the pilots' authority, and seek action elsewhere (for example, by calling a supervisor). Instead, the Chain of Command hierarchy is embedded in the FA reporter's discourse and interactions. The FA reporter reports concerns to the captain; it is the institutional right and responsibility of the captain as head of the Chain of Command to address these concerns.

4.7 Summary

The safety reports are a space for safety talk and demonstration of the role in aviation safety fulfilled by flight attendants. As discussed in Chapter 2, the primary audience of the safety reports (comprised of former pilots, mechanics, and air traffic controllers) does not have experience working as flight attendants. They have little familiarity with the safety-related knowledge flight attendants have. It is therefore understandable that flight attendants writing the safety reports would cite their occupational and institutional tasks related to safety. Repetition of these safety-related practices create indexical stances of professionalism and authority relative to the hierarchical position in the Chain of Command which flight attendants occupy. These stances are appropriate for the institutional speech event, where the primary audience is comprised of those higher in institutional authority than the flight attendants submitting the reports.

In the reports, flight attendants are using discourse which foregrounds their safety knowledge, creating safety-focused linguistic performances. Moreover, these performances heighten the safety and Chain of Command ideologies produced by indexical stances of professionalism, deference, and safety. The Chain of Command motivates much interaction and communication between flight attendants and pilots, and is heightened by the safety reports. The outcome of these practices, indexical stances,

ideologies, and performances is a 'professional safety worker' identity, which conforms to flight attendants' position below pilots in the institutional inflight hierarchy, which also has the knowledge and experience to be assertive and take action when appropriate.

Chapter 5. Discourse in internet forums and the construction of identity

5.0 Introduction

This chapter is an analysis of a selection of posts from my corpus of discussion forum threads. Flight attendant forum participants regard the forums as a ‘virtual aircraft galley’, where they are free to discuss matters outside of institutional constraints. As we will see, however, there are institutionally related influences on the data, irrespective of the non-institutionally affiliated speech event. Flight attendants inevitably spend a great deal of their time at work in aircraft galleys, and talk about a range of topics including, but not limited to, life at work; passengers, pilots; seniority; and work rules at their specific airline. Because the present analysis does not focus on one specific airline, this chapter focuses on topics which are universal across commercial aviation: the flight attendant job; passengers; and pilots. Section 5.1 is a discussion of posts that centre on the elements pertinent to the flight attendant job. Section 5.2 discusses posts about issues to do with passenger service. Section 5.3 discusses posts that focus on pilots, and the flight attendant/pilot working relationship.

5.1 The flight attendant job

Many discussions (here referred to as ‘threads’; see Chapter 3 for introductory discussion of the discussion forums as a data source) concern institutional, occupational, and practical knowledge about the flight attendant job. ‘Practical’ here means the behavioural norms and expectations that emerge and develop as a result of on-the-job experience in the imperfect ‘real world’, away from the idealised context of training. These practical norms and expectations may not be sanctioned by commercial aviation institutions (e.g., airlines, the Federal Aviation Administration [FAA]) but nonetheless exist.

Among flight attendants, there is a practical norm of egalitarianism which stems in part from the training all flight attendants undergo (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). Each flight attendant receives the same training and is imparted with the same knowledge, which is overseen and mandated by the FAA. Moreover, at US airlines, there is little institutional or occupational hierarchy amongst flight attendants. During my time working as a flight attendant I heard many of my coworkers say that ‘we all do the same job’; equally, I learned that there is a strong practical norm to not tell other flight attendants how to do their job. For example, it would violate a practical norm for one flight attendant to tell another how to set up their beverage cart, or how to conduct a pre-flight briefing with exit row passengers. Flight attendants in institutionally authorised

roles of supervision over other flight attendants (e.g., pursers; discussed in Chapters 3 and 4), who make these judgments, are viewed as embodiments of the violation of this norm.

There is also a practical norm of solidarity, which I argue stems from the institutionally mandated ethos of working together as a ‘team’ (discussed in Chapter 4). In Example 4.13 we saw how the flight attendant reporter discursively presented two inflight ‘teams’, the flight attendants who worked together to find the source of the smoke, and the pilots who were reported as unaware of the smoke and uninvolved in the events in the aircraft cabin. Although it violates the Crew Resource Management (CRM)-tenet of one inflight ‘team’ – including both flight attendants and pilots – the flight attendant-only ‘team’ is a construct which is pervasive in the forum discourse. I discussed in Chapter 4 the difficulties of overcoming the institutional, occupational, and social differences between flight attendants and pilots. These differences also contribute to solidarity and unity amongst flight attendants.

This section begins with two examples from a longer thread discussing the concept of ‘professional’ as it relates to flight attendants (FAs). Note that throughout the chapter, I use the terms ‘post’ and ‘example’ to refer to a data example; ‘poster’ or ‘FA poster’ refers to the flight attendant who wrote and submitted the post.

Example 5.1

1. What does professional mean to me?
2. First and foremost, taking my role as a “safety professional” seriously
3. Acting and presenting myself in a manner that [inspires] confidence, not only to passengers, but to the other crew members I am working with
4. Always being aware of the fact that from the moment I step out of my condo in my uniform to the moment I step back into it, after a pairing, people all around me are watching me, and everything I do and say.
5. Leading by example,
6. It is possible to be friendly and have fun, without being cheesy and annoying...
7. Showing interest in what you are doing.
8. If you look disinterested in the safety demo, how are your passengers supposed to be interested in it?
9. for example.
10. Having the passion for what you do,
11. this leads to what [forum participant] said about providing exceptional service, and being able to read your passengers and their needs.
12. There are also the little things, that project/or [don’t] project a professional image,
13. things like waving the safety features card back and forth during the demo, service presentation, and grooming (which to me is not a little thing).
14. If there is one thing that drives me nuts, and I think is completely unprofessional, its chewing gum.
15. That makes me clench.

16. OK that is my rant haha.¹

In Line 1 the FA poster takes up the invitation to participate in the discussion by restating the original question but reframing it in first-person terms. Line 2 uses the rhetorical device *first and foremost* to call attention to the saliency of taking the role of *safety professional* seriously. The poster states that being professional means taking the *role of a safety professional seriously*, which suggests that there are flight attendants who do not take the role of *safety professional* seriously. Indeed, the poster expands on this in Lines 8, 13, and 14. Additionally Line 2 implies that there is an option to *not* take the role of safety professional seriously.

Line 3 builds on Line 2, and expands the poster's definition of safety professional. The FA poster links being *professional* with confidence, and inspiring confidence in co-workers. Line 4 expands the definition beyond the parameters of work to include persons with whom the poster may not come into contact with on the aircraft, but in non-work situations. Line 4 draws on shared occupational and practical knowledge that flight attendants often dress in their uniforms to travel to work, and are instantly visible to the general public.

Line 4 is also linking being a *safety professional*, inspiring confidence in coworkers and passengers, wearing a uniform, and being visible and scrutinised. This connection appears to expand the definition of *safety professional* beyond the boundaries of mere actions to incorporate a physicality of the person. In other words, to be professional means not just to do the tasks in a capable and confident manner, but also to look well-presented and well put together. Line 4 does not explain the phrase *people all around me are watching me*. The implicit knowledge motivating this assertion is the value placed on having a clean, well-fitting uniform. Not only does the airline employer state that a flight attendant's uniform must be clean and well-fitting, flight attendants themselves recognise the link between their uniform, self-presentation, and how they are viewed by non-flight attendants.

Line 5 can be interpreted in two ways. One interpretation is that the FA poster is suggesting that flight attendant forum participants lead other flight attendants *by example*; wearing a clean and well-fitting uniform and taking the role of *safety professional seriously* can inspire other flight attendants to act in a similar manner. This interpretation implies that there are flight attendants who do not do these *professional* practices. The second interpretation is that all flight attendants should lead *by example*; the implication

¹ Throughout the thesis, underlined and/or bold text is my emphasis (unless indicated) and highlights discourse relevant to the discussion.

is that flight attendants are being examples to the flying public (i.e., passengers). This interpretation is motivated by a footing that aligns with and distinguishes flight attendants from non-flight attendants.

Line 6 elaborates the definition of *professional* to include the skill of balancing *being friendly and having fun without being cheesy and annoying*. As with Line 5, the implied objects of Line 6 are passengers and other crew. However, referring to Line 4, a *professional* flight attendant is a physical presence both in and away from the aircraft cabin. Thus there is a distinction between the aircraft cabin where flight attendants are safety professionals who are friendly and have fun, and the world outside of the aircraft cabin where flight attendants are even more conspicuous to non-flight attendants due to their uniforms.

Line 8 refers to *the safety demo*, the institutional and occupational practice of the pre-flight safety demonstration mandated by the FAA and shown for the benefit of passengers. Line 7 signals a frame shift: the FA poster shifts from using first person singular (*I*) to second person pronouns (*you*). The FA poster no longer aligns with the primary audience. Instead, the use of second-person pronoun works to distance the primary audience from the FA poster. Line 8 draws on the authoritative suggestion in Line 5 in the construction of a *professional* flight attendant as a physical presence, on display to passengers and from whom passengers take the lead.

Line 10 hints at the tasks associated with the flight attendant job. Line 11, however, explicitly connects being *professional* with service tasks and emotional labour expectations to care for passengers (cf. Hochschild 2003; Williams 2003). These tasks are not necessarily incongruous with those of a *safety professional* (Line 2), but perhaps can be seen as expanding the definition of *safety professional* as not solely concerned with safety-related tasks.

Line 12 refers to the concept of projecting a *professional image*, which implies that a flight attendant is at times putting on an act (cf. surface acting; Hochschild 2003: 37-38). The implication is that flight attendants do not work in a bubble but instead work with others in a public setting. Moreover, flight attendants again are constructed as physical presences open to and available for public scrutiny. Line 13 makes a connection between safety work, service work, and physical appearance, and is the most explicit connection between these three elements of the flight attendant job that Example 5.1 has made. Line 14 is overt in a specific act, *chewing gum*. This act indexes a casual stance that the FA poster argues is incongruous with a *professional* flight attendant.

The example ends with a hedge, *OK that is my rant haha* (Line 16). The hedge directly indexes an informal, joking stance, and serves to mitigate any potentially face-threatening acts which the FA poster has committed in the utterance. Recall that the discussion forums are not face-to-face discourse, but instead interaction that is solely textual. Thus there is a likelihood that participants can misinterpret posts due to the lack of physical contextualisation or mitigating communicative devices (e.g., facial expressions). Many forum participants attempt to overcome this potential for misinterpretation by using devices such as emoticons which are pictographic indications of the key in which the FA poster intended the post to be interpreted (Dresner and Herring 2010; cf. Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 1). However, this type of communication is not perfect, as readers who misinterpret the emoticon may fail to get this contextualising information.

Given the likelihood for misinterpretation, I would suggest that the hedge in Line 14 indirectly indexes a deferential stance and is acknowledgement of the potentially face-threatening acts in the utterance. Recall that there is a strong practical norm of egalitarianism amongst flight attendants. The FA poster recognises that they may have violated this norm in the post, and is assuming a deferential stance to save face amongst fellow flight attendants.

The FA poster's footing in Example 5.1 shifts, from aligning with flight attendants by alluding to occupational practices in which flight attendants engage such as passenger service duties and the wearing of uniforms, to shifting away from flight attendants, indicated by the limited use of first-person-plural tokens which indicate solidarity and alignment. For example, the poster does not say *we* when referring to flight attendants, but instead *you* and *I* (e.g., Lines 4, 17, 18). Additionally there is a lack of occupational-specific jargon. The poster uses *passengers* (Lines 3, 8, 11) instead of 'pax', an aviation industry term used frequently by flight attendants, as we saw in Chapter 4. The author uses *demo* to refer to the safety demonstration (Line 13), but this incidence appears to be one of the few in-group discourse tokens in the example.

This relative lack of occupationally salient jargon is also seen in Example 5.2, another post taken from the discussion thread from which Example 5.1 is taken.

Example 5.2

1. Have to strike a balance!
2. Remembering you only have one chance to make a first impression
3. Being friendly, but not overly personal or annoying
4. Being fun, but not out-of-control
5. Being polite and respectful, but not a doormat

6. (you will have to have their confidence, later, in the event of an emergency).
7. Displaying a commanding image during safety portion of flight;
8. which starts with flight deck, cabin crew, preflight, demo, compliance checks.
9. But, not militancy, however, when dealing with passengers,
10. they don't need to be talked "down to" and they pay our bills!
11. Being able to emotionally shift into the service mode after safety mode,
12. being happy in your work
13. Do service how the company wants it, not cutting corners because it is easier.
14. Passengers will notice from flight to flight if the service varies.
15. Have a clean uniform, pressed shirt or blouse, polished shoes, and optional, TAN and GREAT HAIR!
16. LOL

In using the word *balance* in Line 1, the FA poster appears to describe a broad dichotomy in the definition of *professional*. Lines 3-5 provide examples of the *balance* that the FA poster believes comprises a professional flight attendant. For example, Line 3 states that a professional flight attendant who is *friendly* can become annoying if the enthusiasm is not controlled (presumably by the flight attendant herself). Line 4 creates a dichotomy between being *fun* and *out-of-control*; implicit in this line is that it is unprofessional to not control oneself and one's emotional state (cf. Hochschild 2003). Line 5 indexes a deferential stance, constructing a dichotomy between *being respectful* and being *a doormat*. This deferential stance can also indirectly index a stereotypical female stance, whereby women are subservient to men (cf. Speer 2005).

Line 6 suggests that there is such a thing as being too deferential, the consequence of which is passengers having no *confidence* in the flight attendant in case of an emergency situation. It is interesting that this example has linked inspiring confidence in passengers to the careful mediation of politeness and deference, because it is not an obvious link. Confidence in the ability of a flight attendant to conduct an emergency evacuation, perform CPR, or extinguish an onboard fire does not necessarily follow from the level of politeness or deference a flight attendant shows to a passenger. Moreover, Line 6 constructs a symbiotic relationship between flight attendants and passengers during an emergency. Flight attendants need the confidence of passengers in case of an emergency; implicit in this assertion is that passengers need flight attendants' skill and knowledge during an emergency. This constructs the flight attendant as a key safety worker, yet the author has linked politeness – not experience in emergency training – with gaining confidence the confidence of passengers.

Note also the use in Line 6 of the 'what if?' discourse strategy, discussed in Chapter 4. The FA poster cites the possibility of an emergency situation as a primary reason for the *professional* behaviour traits being cited. Use of this strategy in the non-

institutionally affiliated speech event of the discussion forums demonstrates how deeply ingrained safety awareness is amongst flight attendants. Later posts to the thread do not call attention to the phrase *in the event of an emergency*, indicating that not only does this discourse strategy exist amongst forum participants but that it is so widespread as to not be noticeable.

The words *commanding* (Line 7) and *militancy* (Line 9) stand out as incongruous with the rest of the example. These two words index hierarchy and power, and can indirectly index masculinity (Kiesling 2007). Their presence serves to call attention to an important issue for many flight attendants: the mediation between safety work and service work. (This balance between the two broad occupational expectations has been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4.) While the safety reports perhaps do not explicitly address this mediation, my experience as a flight attendant supports the assertion that there is tension between safety and service occupational expectations. Indeed, we shall see throughout this chapter that safety/service task expectations are a prominent topic of discussion. Note that *commanding* is used when describing flight attendant safety-related tasks (Line 7), and *militancy* is used to contrast with *professional* interaction with passengers (Lines 9 and 10). Note also that Line 11 describes the mediation between safety work and service work. Thus Example 5.2 uses multiple tactics to demonstrate the saliency that *professional* flight attendants can skillfully mediate between safety and service work, aware that they are on display for passenger evaluation.

Lines 12-14 demonstrate the influence of institutional expectations and training. Despite this discussion taking place in a setting away from airline employers, the FA poster cites the importance of keeping to company service standards irrespective of their ease or difficulty. Similar to Line 12 in Example 5.1 above, Line 12 in Example 5.2 draws on emotional labour expectations such as smiling and appearing to be happy. Here, the FA poster admonishes the primary audience to be *happy in your work* – despite, for example the potential for safety and occupational incidents to occur, as the data in Chapter 4 demonstrated. It is possibly asking a lot for someone to be *happy in your work* despite, for example, being injured on the job in a turbulence-related incident (as in Example 4.8) or being forced to work beyond legal duty limitations due to a breakdown in Crew Resource Management (CRM) (as in Example 4.20). Yet Example 5.2 erases these practical realities of the job, focusing on the impact on passengers (Line 14) of following company service standards (Line 13).

One point I would like to discuss is the acknowledgement of the uniform and physical appearance of the *professional* flight attendant in Line 15. Like Lines 4 and 13 in

Example 5.1, Line 15 links the idealised *professional* flight attendant with a clean, well-fitting uniform. Flight attendant talk about and concern with the uniform is influenced by gender stereotype, social history, and occupational expectations. Wearing a uniform is an occupational expectation that works to distinguish flight attendants from other groups of people in commercial aviation, most notably passengers (in the aircraft cabin) and pilots (with whom flight attendants spend a great deal of time on the job). Uniforms have been used in the past to draw attention to and at times sexualise flight attendant bodies (Boris 2006; see also Omelia and Waldock 2003). Since deregulation in the 1980s, airlines are able to compete on airfares and not only on service (and the bodies of flight attendants, via uniforms). Flight attendant uniforms can now be considered more functional and less of a means of drawing attention to the physical attributes of female flight attendants than in the past.

For many flight attendants, the uniform is still a significant marker of the job, and something in which they take great pride. There are many posts in my corpus concerned with the uniform, from new uniform pieces to the fit and durability of certain pieces to what airline has the best uniforms. Many flight attendants link pride in the uniform to pride in the job and accomplishing occupational and institutional tasks with skill and devotion. Yet there is a physicality involved in the uniform as it is the primary means of distinguishing flight attendants from non-flight attendants. A well-fitting uniform will, as a consequence of its fit, display the body of the person wearing it. Some female flight attendants shorten their dress or skirt, resulting in a ‘miniskirt’ style that is frequently against airline uniform guidelines. Many airlines provide a larger variety of optional pieces for female uniforms than for male uniforms; thus, female flight attendants have a wider range of pieces from which to choose and as a result there is larger variation in female flight attendant uniforms than in male uniforms. Thus attention to detail of the uniform and its fit can index women who are socialised to show concern with and take pride in their physical appearance. This indexical stance can be seen in the end of Line 15 (*and optional, TAN and GREAT HAIR!*), which calls attention to physical appearance stereotypes which have stronger associations with women than with men.

The end of Line 15 and Line 16 are written in a joking key and function as hedges to mitigate potential face-threatening acts (cf. Mills 2003) of the previous lines. In ending the post with the multiple-part hedge, the FA poster acknowledges the potential face-threatening acts contained within the post, particularly the lines in which the idealised *professional* flight attendant is constructed. In reality not all flight attendants conform to this idealised construction. Both the FA poster and the primary audience are aware of this

fact; the hedges in Lines 15 and 16 serve to preserve the egalitarianism and solidarity norms described above. The joking tone of the hedges is a metamessage (cf. Tannen 1990) to the primary audience that the poster is not telling anyone how they should act but is merely participating in the discussion about what *professional* means to them.

Flight attendants in the forum engage in debate about the most salient or meaningful aspects of their job, and often construct a binary between tasks related to safety (e.g., pre-flight safety demonstrations to passengers; evacuating aircraft in an emergency) and service tasks (e.g., beverage services). This binary is evident in Examples 5.3-5.5, below, which are three posts in one thread discussing an emergency evacuation and subsequent internal airline memo about the event. The memo highlights the important role that the pilots in the crew played in the safe landing of the aircraft but does not mention any contribution that the flight attendant crew made to the safe landing.

Example 5.3

1. They just need to remember, *OUR* job starts when *THEY* F#(k up theirs!!!!

Example 5.3 alludes to safety knowledge and tasks that flight attendants are trained to do – the ‘cabin safety professional’ discussed in Examples 5.1 and 5.2. *OUR job* refers to safety-related flight attendant tasks done to prepare passengers and cabin for a safe emergency landing. The second instance of *THEY* refers to pilots. Note that the example clearly emphasises the separation between the two employee groups by using capital letters. In constructing flight attendants as having the sole task of looking after passengers and the cabin in an emergency, Example 5.3 ignores the more prominently visible service tasks flight attendants engage in. In reality, flight attendants engage in service-related tasks far more frequently than emergency-related tasks. This post uses erasure (Irvine and Gal 2009) to emphasise the safety work that many flight attendants feel is a vital component of their job. The example aligns the FA poster with the primary audience of fellow flight attendants. The linguistic practices directly index a confrontational stance: the emphasis on *OUR* and *THEY*, discussed above and the explicative *F#(k* hint at dissonance between flight attendants and pilots. Using an expletive (even mitigated, as in this example) works to heighten the footing that the FA poster is assuming. The indexical stance of confrontation is reinforced by the multiple exclamation marks at the end of the post, used for emphasis.

It is unclear to whom or what the first instance of *They* is referring (*They just need to remember*): pilots, airline management, the press, passengers, the FAA, or the general public, to name a few likely possibilities. What is clear, however, is that with the first use

of *They*, the FA poster is constructing and addressing an unnamed group of individuals whose opinion about flight attendants seems to be important. Moreover, the first use of *They* works to construct a binary view of commercial aviation with respect to flight attendants: *They* (non-flight attendants) are not members of *OUR* flight attendant occupation.

As the forums are primarily for flight attendant participation and discussion, it seems fitting that posts would display positive attitudes toward the flight attendant job, particularly aspects salient to FA participants themselves. Similar to Example 5.3, Example 5.4 gives primacy to the safety-related tasks of flight attendants:

Example 5.4

1. My saying is ...
2. “if you walked away from an airplane crash, thank a flight attendant!”

Line 1 displays the poster’s alignment in this example. *My saying is* is a rhetorical device calling attention to a contextually important utterance. By using the first-person possessive pronoun *My*, the poster simultaneously takes ownership of their discourse and aligns with flight attendants, both in the primary audience and outside of the forum. *My saying is* prioritises the personal philosophy which frames the poster’s worldview in such a way as to focus on safety aspects of the flight attendant job, and play down the service aspects. Line 2 presumably addresses non-flight attendants. In using *you*, it constructs a dichotomy between *you* non-flight attendants and those who are flight attendants, whom *you* should thank if still alive after an airplane crash. Line 2 also uses a hypothetical ‘what if’ scenario, discussed in Chapter 4, to increase the focus on the safety-related knowledge of flight attendants. The likelihood that someone will be involved in an aviation emergency is small; yet Line 2 appears to give primacy to the emergency training which flight attendants undergo annually but rarely get an opportunity to put to use.

Example 5.5

1. If the engine blew during climb-out, the FA’s were still in their seats doing nothing (except in my case, a crossword puzzle).
2. Look, everyone calm down.
3. If there was an evac then yeah, I’d be pissed if the FA’s weren’t mentioned, but this was a flight deck emergency that had little to do with what we do best:
4. get people off of a doomed airplane.

Where Example 5.3 and 5.4 align themselves with flight attendants, Example 5.5 is not as explicit in its ends (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2). In Lines 1 and

2, the poster appears to be assuming a footing away from flight attendants by constructing an image of a flight attendant partaking in a leisure activity (*a crossword puzzle*), or *doing nothing* during an important safety-related phase of flight (*climb-out*). The phrase *doing nothing* indicates the physical tasks that cannot be performed by flight attendants until after the aircraft has leveled off from the climb-out phase of flight. Flight attendants are trained to be alert during take-off for unusual sounds, smells, and sights (e.g., smoke or the smell of burning plastic, as seen in Example 4.13 in Chapter 4). This type of task does not strictly constitute *doing nothing*, as Line 1 asserts, yet on the surface it can appear as though the flight attendant is not actively working. In reality, however, many flight attendants do use the time during climb-out and descent for engaging in such leisure activities as reading and doing crossword puzzles. Thus the FA poster displays their insider knowledge of the reality of flight attendant activities while at the same time aligning away from flight attendants who give primacy to safety-related tasks over the more mundane and prevalent service tasks.

Line 2 uses the discourse marker *look* to call attention to the command to *calm down*. The FA poster addresses the primary audience of the participants in the discussion apparently in an agitated state over the discussion. The FA poster is positioned as calmer than the other participants and able to provide a more rational interpretation of the topic being discussed (the internal company memo) than previous participants have done. Lines 3 and 4 align the FA poster with the primary audience of flight attendants in a number of ways. The poster uses occupational jargon such as *evac* (evacuation) and *FA's* (flight attendants). The poster references the *flight deck*, the current institutionally ratified term replacing the older *cockpit* (which is still widely used by both aviation industry employees and members of the general public). Finally, the poster shifts footing at the end of Line 3 and in Line 4 to align with flight attendants who foreground safety-related knowledge and tasks over service duties (*what we do best: get people off of a doomed airplane*). The word *doomed* connotes certain and inevitable death, and serves to emphasise the importance of flight attendants to passenger survival in emergency landings.

While forum discourse frequently displays the salience of safety-related tasks for flight attendants, the data also show that flight attendants in the forums discuss service tasks as well. Example 5.6 is taken from a discussion about interaction with passengers regarding serving coffee:

Example 5.6

1. I am sorry but this is my biggest friggin [pet peeve].
2. After about the third row of coach I am over it on asking how you take your coffee.
3. When you go to starbucks do they know what you want?
4. Neither do I!!!
5. I am not a friggin mindreader, tell me [what's] in it.
6. Gotta love coming out of ewr heading south, when you ask Gina from Jersey City how she wants it, she looks at you and says in question form, cream and suga?
7. with the attitude to go along with it.
8. Like [don't] you know you dip#&t?
9. sorry Gina, I guess I [didn't] get my coffee with cream and suga yet.
10. Sugar, s-u-g-a, sugar, [that's] the Jersey City schools for ya lol.

Example 5.6 makes a comparison between service workers at a major international chain of coffee shops (*Starbucks*, Line 3) and flight attendants. The post does not refute the construction of flight attendant as service worker; indeed, the FA poster seems to accept it as part of their overall job. Example 5.6 positions the FA poster away from passengers, constructing separate groups of people who occupy the aircraft cabin: flight attendants and passengers. Passengers are constructed as ignorant and confrontational (Lines 6 and 7). The FA poster seeks to control passengers, having them respond and interact according to what is most convenient for flight attendants. Example 5.6 rejects the traditional construction of the service worker who adheres to the business mantra 'the customer is always right'.

Example 5.6 uses shared occupational and institutional knowledge to express attitudes towards passengers (i.e., non-flight attendants) in an informal space away from institutional interactional demands. The post contains several potentially face-threatening acts if it were located in a different participant setting, for example in an airline employer training session. However its location in the forums means that the FA poster can speak unrestricted by occupational and institutional passenger interactional norms. The use of occupational in-group terms such as *the third row of coach* (Line 2) and the airport code *EWB* (meaning Newark, New Jersey, Line 6) contribute to the construction of this post for the primary audience of fellow flight attendants.

Although Example 5.6 contains several examples of expletives and directly indexes a confrontational stance, it indirectly indexes conformity and adherence to airline service standards. The post does not, for example, object to the act of serving coffee; instead it is taken for granted that flight attendants routinely do beverage services. Example 5.6 does not argue against the service tasks that are part of the flight attendant job. Instead, the poster uses the beverage service as a resource to negotiate interaction rituals between flight attendants and passengers.

Example 5.7 is a response to Example 5.6 and provides a different perspective to flight attendant interaction with passengers.

Example 5.7

1. It literally takes 0.5 seconds to say “cream sugar?”.
2. Multiply that by 100 and you have 50 seconds out of your 4 hour flight bothering with asking people how they like their coffee.
3. When I get coffee at Mac Donald’s, I always forget to say how I like it so it must be normal human nature not think of it.
4. Even worse are FA’s who make instructional PA’s that sound belittling and snarky:
5. “if you’re having coffee tell us how you take it”,
6. “if you’re eating, lower your tray table”,
7. “if you’re drinking something on this short flight, have your choice when we come to you”,
8. “to turn on your light press the light bulb picture, not the person”.
9. It’s tacky and kind of lazy.
10. Just ask, yes each one if necessary, the same question over and over.
11. That’s what we get paid for, it’s not hard and that’s what individual service is all about.
12. It’s kind of like the lav doors ---
13. if 75% of the PAX don’t intuitively know how to open them, it must be an ergonomic design flaw.
14. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with the PAX, it’s the door.
15. Similarly, if most PAX don’t state their coffee preference, it must be totally normal to forget that and therefore not worth getting worked up over.
16. No, I don’t have an [ounce] of disdain for my own peeps, it’s just that I’m a very observational passenger a lot too.

Similar to Example 5.6, this post compares flight attendants to service workers at a major international restaurant chain (*McDonalds*, Line 3). This construction appears incongruous with the earlier construction in Example 5.3 of flight attendant as key safety worker, erasing the more visible service work that flight attendants do. The post contains knowledge of occupational practices and practical conventions, which at the same time are potentially face-threatening acts. For example, Lines 4-9 describe behaviour the FA poster has witnessed whilst working with fellow flight attendants. The FA poster is explicit in their disdain for coworkers who engage in these unsanctioned practices which nonetheless occur regularly, as my own experience confirms. The announcements in Lines 5-8 violate airline policies; they persist, however, because passenger compliance with the unsanctioned announcements makes the flight attendant’s job easier and results in less spoken interaction with passengers.

Line 11 (*That’s what we get paid for*) cites the fact that interaction with passengers is an inherent part of the flight attendant job, and the job exists solely due to

passenger travel (cf. Example 5.2, Line 10: *[passengers] don't need to be talked "down to" and they pay our bills!*). Other examples of occupational knowledge in Example 5.7 are the reference in Line 2 to service standards and passenger loads (*Multiply that by 100... your 4 hour flight*), and using the aviation industry abbreviation *pax* for passengers (Lines 13-15). The post ends with a temporary shift in footing, from disparaging fellow flight attendants to aligning with them (*my own peeps*, Line 16). This temporary footing shift works to remind the primary audience that the FA poster is a fellow flight attendant and not an outsider. Yet the second half of Line 16 marks a second shift in footing, whereby the FA poster positions themselves as not only a flight attendant but also a passenger. This dual construction is uncommon in the forums; in their posts, flight attendants are explicit in constructing themselves as flight attendants and not passengers. When posts contain reference to flight attendants 'pass-riding' (flying as a passenger in the aircraft cabin), flight attendants always are framed as separate from and exclusive of passengers. Hence Line 16 is unusual in establishing the FA poster's footing as both aligning with fellow flight attendants and with passengers.

Flight attendants frequently do not know with whom they will be working on most flights, owing to several factors (e.g., size of flight attendant base; scheduling needs). While it is true that all flight attendants receive the same training (discussed above and in Chapters 3 and 4), it is also true that each flight attendant has a unique personality. However much training flight attendants undergo, their personalities will emerge on the job, which can sometimes make for unpleasant flights if there are personality clashes. Inevitably, talk about the flight attendant job includes not only specific tasks and duty expectations, but also talk about coworkers. A popular thread in one forum centres on participants co-creating a 'typology' of flight attendants, complete with 'character names' and descriptions. Posts are written in a joking key (Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2), with many participants acknowledging that they themselves have been one of these 'types' at one time or another. Example 5.8 provides one such 'type':

Example 5.8

1. "Space Cadet Susanne"
2. She marches to the beat of a different drum.
3. She's not the brightest bulb on the marquee.
4. Her purse has been stolen many times, and she has really strange stories about strangers in her hotel room.
5. If your name [is] Todd, she will call you Tom for 4 days.
6. She can be any seniority.
7. The pilots think she is creepy, and so do you.
8. Her hair is a mess.

9. Her uniform has stains.

Example 5.8 draws on shared practical knowledge about the realities of working as a flight attendant in the construction of this ‘character type’. For example, the beginning of Line 4 (*Her purse has been stolen many times*) draws on knowledge gained through flying experience about flight attendants’ personal property. Most airplanes do not have secure storage locations where flight attendants can keep valuables, such as wallets or handbags. Through experience, flight attendants learn where is best to keep such valuables during flights so that they do not go missing. If a flight attendant’s handbag or purse is stolen more than once, then her situational awareness skills could begin to be called into question by her coworkers. Thus the first part of Line 4 uses practical knowledge to contextualise the generic idioms used in Lines 2 and 3.

The end of Line 4 (*strangers in her hotel room*) draws on knowledge gained through experience on the job about layovers. Flight attendants often have trips that operate over more than one day; they therefore have much experience with staying in hotels. Hotels having contracts with airlines to provide rooms exclusively for airline crew use will generally block off a number of rooms; these rooms are used only by crew and not by ‘regular’ guests. A major disadvantage of this system concerns security. If crew regularly stay in the same rooms in the same hotel, it is then relatively simple to illicitly learn in which rooms crew stay. In 1991 a flight attendant was murdered in her hotel room on a layover²; in 2000 a flight attendant was murdered on a layover whilst walking near her hotel³. While rare, it is not unheard of for a crewmember’s hotel room to be broken into and their uniform, airline identification, flight operations manuals, and passport stolen. For these reasons, information about layover hotels is confidential, and crewmembers are trained to keep both the name of the hotel and their room number secret.

Crews undertake measures to protect their own personal security when arriving at their hotel rooms on a layover. Pilots and flight attendants are trained to walk together to their rooms, and have another crewmember do a ‘room check’ to ensure personal safety. Therefore, encountering a stranger in a hotel room whilst on a layover is not only cause for concern from a personal security point of view, but, like the stolen purse comment, calls into question the flight attendant’s situational awareness skills and attention to airline security procedures.

² See for example Teamsters.org (2002).

³ See for example Kelley (2000).

Line 6 uses the occupational concept of seniority as a contextualization cue to enhance the *Space Cadet* definition. Seniority (i.e., the concept of increasing status and privilege as an employee accrues years of employment at the airline) also brings with it experience and workplace knowledge. Flight attendants who are recently hired ('newhires') have little seniority and little knowledge about the particular airline for which they work. Thus, flight attendants who have several years of seniority at an airline will presumably have more occupational and practical knowledge of and experience about working than 'newhires'.

Line 7 includes an assessment from pilots about *Space Cadet Susanne*. Ostensibly there is no need to include pilots' opinions about this semi-fictional construction, yet I argue that inclusion of it speaks to the status that pilots have in commercial aviation, and the prestige that their opinion brings. Note the order in which the aviation occupations are presented in Line 7: pilots first, then *you*, indicating flight attendants. This ordering reinforces the Chain of Command hierarchy, while at the same time reinforces the privileged position pilots have in commercial aviation. Their opinion matters enough to be included in a 'typology' of semi-fictional flight attendant characters in a non-institutionally sanctioned internet discussion forum primarily aimed at flight attendants. Moreover, inclusion of pilots' assessment of the *Space Cadet* speaks to the idealised 'team' construction of flight attendants and pilots. If one part of the 'team' thinks a 'team' member is *creepy*, the 'team' construction could be in jeopardy should an emergency happen.

Lines 8 and 9 describe the physical appearance of the *Space Cadet* to further enhance the definition. As seen in Example 5.2, many flight attendants include in the definition of professional flight attendant a clean uniform and tidy physical appearance. The flight attendant uniform becomes a metaphor for the person within it: if the uniform is messy, then the person wearing the uniform is likely to be unreliable. While this correlation is not necessarily true, it nonetheless demonstrates the strong link that many flight attendants have with their job and the uniform.

Thus, Example 5.8 uses shared practical knowledge about security procedures, the link between seniority and occupational knowledge, and the semiotic and metaphoric power of the uniform to define the *Space Cadet*. The *Space Cadet* is called Susanne, instead of a male name. We could infer that the poster is drawing on societal and popular cultural stereotypes of female flight attendants as dim-witted or less intellectually astute than their male counterparts (cf. Baker et al. 2003; Moles and Friedman 1973; Murphy

2001). Example 5.9 picks up on the ‘character’ in Example 5.8 and enhances it with real-life experience:

Example 5.9

1. The space cadet?
2. Had a captain years ago say about my co-worker
3. (who wanted to know if that was “snow on top of the [mountains]” as we cruised at 30K between MCO-MIA in July)...
4. “Damn, that girl don’t know the difference between a DC9 and an IUD.”

Example 5.9 contributes to the *Space Cadet* definition by providing an anecdote from a real-life experience whilst working. The example draws on shared occupational knowledge; for example the use of airport abbreviation codes *MCO* (Orlando, Florida) and *MIA* (Miami, Florida); the abbreviated *30K* to refer to the cruising altitude of 30,000 feet above ground; and a specific type of aircraft, *DC9* (which is configured to hold 100 passengers, and is usually staffed with FAA-minimum crew of two flight attendants). The reconstructed dialogue in Line 4 (*that girl don’t know the difference*) uses nonstandard syntax to indicate that the line is intended in an informal, joking key. Line 4 also offers a gendered construction of the real-life *Space Cadet*. The captain is constructed as introducing a method of birth control into the observation of the *Space Cadet*, implying that a female over age eighteen should possess knowledge about different types of birth control devices. The reference to a birth control device in the reconstructed dialogue of the captain stands out because it is unexpected for such an intimate object to be mentioned in conversation between two co-workers whom we can assume are relative strangers. Therefore the comparison of the aircraft type (*DC9*) with method of birth control (*IUD*) indexes a stance of joking and solidarity, whilst indirectly indexing gender stereotypes.

As in Example 5.8 we see the inclusion of a pilot’s assessment of the *Space Cadet* (Line 4). The entire point of the post appears to be, as well as the punchline, to relate what the captain said about the FA poster’s co-worker, not to relate what the FA poster herself thinks. This real-life corroboration of the semi-fictional *Space Cadet* in Example 5.8 also provides a real-life example of the status that captains have within the aircraft. The reconstructed utterance in Line 4 coming from a different aviation employee with lower status than a pilot (e.g., caterer or gate agent) would not have the same contextually relevant meaning. Participants in the thread share knowledge about the status of pilots in both commercial aviation and wider society. Moreover, the thread participants share the knowledge that pilots have institutional authority and power over flight attendants

through the institutional hierarchy of the Chain of Command. The captain has special status as head of the Chain of Command and ultimate authority over the aircraft. Another primary task of captains is to work toward building an inflight ‘team’ feeling. Part of the job of building a ‘team’ feeling is to show respect toward crewmembers, and try to get along with everyone in the crew. Therefore, including the captain’s assessment of the *Space Cadet* has special meaning for the participants – the captain saying the flight attendant is a space cadet gives extra support to the initial space cadet assessment. In other words, if the captain thinks the flight attendant is a space cadet, then she must be a space cadet.

Section summary

In discussing the flight attendant job and what it entails, forum participants draw not only on shared occupational and institutional knowledge, but also include practical knowledge in their posts. Despite the non-institutionally sanctioned speech event and setting, many of the posts in this section are framed by institutional influences on discourse. The uniform (an institutional and occupational requirement for flight attendants) is used as a metaphor for the quality and ability of the person wearing it, as we saw in Examples 5.2 and 5.8. If the uniform is a mess, then the flight attendant is less capable than if the uniform is clean and pressed.

Service tasks are unquestioned and undisputed. Despite some less than desired interactions between flight attendants and passengers, there is no refuting the fact that service is a primary part of the flight attendant job (as seen in Examples 5.1, 5.6, and 5.7). There are posts that give primacy to safety tasks (Examples 5.3-5.5), but crucially service tasks are never mitigated or denied. There are no posts I encountered which exhort fellow flight attendants to stop doing their service-related tasks. Participants accept that service is part of their job; their discourse reflects this acceptance.

Finally, some posts which describe the flight attendant job draw on institutional authority and status of pilots, especially the captain. Inclusion of pilots’ assessments of flight attendant behaviour offers support for FA poster assertions, as in Examples 5.8 and 5.9. Inclusion of pilots’ assessments and opinions of flight attendant behaviour reinforces the status that pilots have in commercial aviation and society, as well as the authority and power that pilots have over flight attendants.

5.2 Passengers

Passenger service is a fundamental part of the flight attendant job. Indeed, the occupation of flight attendant exists solely because of the presence of passengers on commercial flights. We saw in Chapter 4 that some flight attendants used passengers as a resource for articulating their own assertions and concerns, reflecting the power that profit-wielding passengers have in commercial aviation.

For many flight attendants, there exists a tension between safety and service duties. We saw this tension between safety and service responsibilities discussed in Example 5.2, while Examples 5.3 and 5.4 erased service responsibilities altogether in constructing flight attendants as solely focused on safety duties. Many flight attendants routinely joke that they are ‘there to save your ass, not kiss it’ (cf. Whitelegg 2007). In other words, there is a strong practical belief that the primary purpose of flight attendants is safety-related and passenger service is a secondary and less important set of duties. Yet flight attendant service-related tasks are what most passengers witness, given the rarity of inflight emergencies and incidents. Moreover, many airlines continue to include their unique inflight services and amenities in advertising campaigns. These services are primarily the responsibility of and carried out by flight attendants.

Thus there is a continuous negotiation amongst many flight attendants about what is most salient in the flight attendant occupation: safety duties, service responsibilities, or some third, as yet unknown, unnamed area of responsibility. The discussion forums are one speech event where this negotiation occurs. This section begins with how a common occupational task – the inflight beverage service – is constructed and discussed in a thread. Example 5.10 uses shared practical knowledge and occupational terms in a post about beverage consumption habits of passengers on flights from Oslo.

Example 5.10

1. Yikes....
2. OSL!!
3. Yes, it's a bad one, the beverage service takes forever.
4. That was one of my first international flights when I was on reserve.
5. They drink alcohol likes there's no tomorrow!
6. I had the back of the 753 filled with OSL pax going to LAS....
7. need I say more?

Example 5.10 contains several examples of shared practical and occupational knowledge. For example, the FA poster uses the International Air Transport Association (IATA) airport abbreviation codes to indicate the departure and arrival cities of Oslo (*OSL*) and Las Vegas (*LAS*). The aviation industry abbreviation *pax* is used in Line 6 to refer to

passengers. Line 4 references the commercial aviation industry practice of *reserve*⁴ which indexes a range of occupational and practical knowledge, expectations, and experiences. Line 6 refers to the 753, a particular type of aircraft. The term *the back of the 753* refers to the economy cabin of the aircraft, and is common discursive practice amongst flight attendants in speech events which do not concern interactions framed by institutional hierarchical expectations and which have informal interactional norms (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2).

The post does not dispute the service aspect of the flight attendant job. What is notable is the reference to the amount of beverages which passengers consume. Line 3 implies that there is an expected time limit for beverage services, to which flights to and from Oslo do not conform. The implicit message is that passengers should be constrained in the amount of beverages, particularly alcoholic beverages, which they consume during flights. Line 6 builds on this implicit message and is a phrase-length contextualization cue. Readers who do not share the practical knowledge and experience of the FA poster may fail to understand the nuanced messages that Line 6 communicates. *OSL pax* indexes a type of passenger who requires an uncommonly high amount of beverages, particularly alcoholic beverages (referenced in Line 5). The airport code *LAS* indexes a similar type of passenger. In addition to stereotypically consuming a higher than usual amount of alcohol, typical passengers on a flight to Las Vegas are in a carefree, upbeat mood because they are usually going on holiday. Because of this anticipated holiday mood, typical *LAS* passengers can tend to be loud, boisterous, and unconcerned for the expected behavioural norms to which passengers are expected to conform. There are exceptions to this construction; however, the data suggest and my own experience supports that most *LAS* passengers behave in a similar way to the passengers constructed in Example 5.10.


The post frames the passenger service experience in negative terms (*bad*, Line 3), and constructs a dichotomy between flight attendants and passengers. Line 5 refers to the passengers as *they*. The post begins with the colloquial exclamation *Yikes*; the airport abbreviation *OSL* is punctuated with two exclamation marks, indicating the FA poster's strong feelings about the types of flights that are described in the post. Yet the post does not mitigate the service expectations, demonstrating the degree to which the FA poster has accepted institutional and occupational service expectations. The post serves instead

⁴ Reserve is the practice whereby flight attendants with low seniority are assigned monthly schedules of days off and days 'on call' when they must be available to Crew Scheduling for trip assignment with as little as three hours' notice before departure. Being 'on reserve' is disliked for several reasons, including lack of control (over one's personal life, the trips one works, and over the position one works in the cabin during a flight) (cf. Whitelegg 2007).

as a release for the FA poster's feelings which do not conform to expectations created by sociohistoric stereotypes (discussed in Chapter 3) and advertising copy.

The data also suggest that flight attendant forum participants hold certain beliefs about passenger behavioural norms which may or may not be based in institutional reality. When passengers violate these norms, forum participants mark it as notable for discussion. Example 5.11 demonstrates a typical post about a passenger violating expected behavioural norms:

Example 5.11

1. well, [there's a lot] to choose from...
2. guess I'll start with the lady (sitting in the main cabin) who decided that the only sanitary place to change her [baby's] diaper was in an empty first class seat.
3. She just marched up there and proceeded to change the [baby's] very dirty and stinky diaper while first class passengers were in the middle of a dinner service.
4. As the lead f/a I asked her to please go to the lav to do that.
5. She started yelling at me that she wouldn't place her baby in our filthy lav.
6. I offered her a clean blanket and a place in the back.
7. She said our blankets were filthy too.
8. The smell in the first class cabin became unbearable, but she wouldn't budge.
9. When she was finished changing the baby she took the dirty diaper (left OPEN), and threw it at me.
10. Luckily she aimed low and it hit my chest and bounced off onto the floor.
11. It was the only uniform I had on a 3 day trip, and despite my best efforts at cleaning, I smelled pretty stinky for the rest of the trip.
12. The captain insisted on having security meet the plane and detain her to explain the rules of good conduct on an aircraft..... 

Example 5.11 draws on shared practical knowledge about passenger behavioural expectations to reconstruct this interaction. For example, Line 2, *(sitting in main cabin)*, is meant as a parenthetical aside, but functions as a contextualization cue when read in the context of the post. Passengers sitting in the main cabin (i.e., economy-class) are discouraged by flight attendants for service-related reasons from entering the first-class cabin. Moreover, federal regulations prohibit passengers gathering around the first-class lavatory (part of the post-9/11 aviation security measures). Flight attendants rarely allow passengers seated in the main cabin to use the first-class lavatory; equally, flight attendants strongly discourage passengers from changing a diaper in a passenger seat or in the passenger cabin, irrespective of cabin type. Thus, the passenger seating in the main cabin, entering the first-class cabin to change her baby's diaper in a first-class seat, violates several inflight behavioural norms and expectations. The disapproval from the FA poster is evident by the words used in connection with the passenger and her behaviour (*dirty, stinky, filthy*). These words also stand out because they index

uncleanliness and poor hygiene, and are not commonly associated with air travel or a comfortable, routine flight.

Line 11 calls attention to how the passenger's behaviour has affected the FA poster. In addition to hygiene standards of not wanting to wear a uniform smelling of fecal matter, the poster places symbolic value on having a clean uniform (as in Examples 5.1 and 5.2). The FA poster reports that she put her *best efforts* into cleaning the uniform, because it was her only uniform for the *3 day trip* she was working. The phrase *3 day trip* draws on shared occupational knowledge about the reality of the flight attendant job. Flight attendants work flights (sometimes called 'legs' of a trip); a 'trip' is comprised of the flights that are worked. Trips can be any length of time, from a 'turn' (consisting of two flights, to a destination and returning to the base city) to several days, depending on operational needs. A three-day trip is one of the most common lengths of time to be scheduled away from base.

Line 12 signals a frame shift away from the passenger's behaviour, focusing instead on aviation security standards. The line is written in a joking key, signaled by the 'smiley' at the end of the sentence. Yet the content of Line 12 is serious: the passenger could have been creating a diversion away from something far more serious in the cabin such as a potential terrorist attack⁵. We can interpret Line 12 as an example of 'good' CRM in that the inflight 'team' worked well together and the captain supported the flight attendant in a positive outcome (see Chapter 3 for further discussion of CRM). Yet the outcome of the captain having security meet the plane presupposes that the captain has the institutional authority to enact such an event. Thus, the frame shift works to call attention to the Chain of Command ideology.

Example 5.11 positions the FA poster as the ultimate hero of the story (cf. Santino 1978). The example draws on the shared knowledge of the primary audience in the retelling of an antagonist (*the lady*) who is constructed as out of control, and inconsiderate to both fellow passengers and the FA poster working in the first-class cabin. The *lead FA* protagonist preserves her dignity by not retaliating against the aggressive actions of the diaper-throwing lady. Example 5.11 also reproduces emotional labour work. For example, in Line 6, the *lead FA* offers the passenger a clean blanket and a private space in which to change her baby's diaper. The passenger has already been constructed as rude and aggressive; the flight attendant is constructed as assuming a footing opposite that of the passenger, indexing a stance of hegemonic femininity by

⁵ The likelihood of this possibility is very low; however, flight attendants are trained to be constantly vigilant for potential security risks.

conforming to gendered behavioural norms (cf. Fenstermaker and West 2002; Hochschild 2003). The post uses a joking key to reproduce and conform to sociohistoric, occupational, and institutional behavioural norms.

Recall that in Section 5.1 I argued that a practical norm of solidarity exists amongst flight attendants. This solidarity amongst a flight attendant crew exists irrespective of length of time served or previously knowing the crew before a flight, and is seen in Example 5.12:

Example 5.12

1. On the 75 going to UIO...
2. The night before the trip I went to the store and bought a big wheel of Camembert cheese, crackers, fruit and chocolates for the crew.
3. I thought it would be a nice gesture and help us get through the red eye.
4. After the service, when it seemed that everyone was asleep, I closed the curtain on the back galley and pulled out one of those tray thingys.
5. I set up the cheese real cute with the knife and crackers and the fruit in a bowl next to it and the chocolates laid out.
6. Then I went to the forward galley to invite the rest of the crew to my little “picnic” I had set up.
7. When we got to the back and opened the curtain, there were two guys, with knives in hand, slicing off the cheese and helping themselves.
8. Half of my \$25 wheel of cheese was eaten as well as the fruit and chocolates.
9. I just looked at them and told them that was my personal food I brought from home.
10. Their response was “oh, we thought it was for passengers”.
11. Yea right...
12. behind a closed curtain and after we had just served a full meal service...
13. not to mention expensive french cheese and toblerone chocolate..
14. IN COACH.
15. Whatever...
16. manners and etiquette are a lost art.

The post draws on shared occupational and practical knowledge. The phrase *On the 75* in Line 1 is an informal reference to the type of aircraft on which the incident occurred (cf. Example 5.10, above). The phrase *going to UIO* (the International Air Transport Association [IATA] airport code for Quito, Ecuador) is practical aviation jargon, reproducing how flight attendants textually communicate to each other their work-related travel. Line 3 describes the type of flight that the poster was working, *the red eye*. These overnight flights are often difficult for flight attendants to work if they have not adequately prepared (e.g., altering their sleep patterns). Federal regulations prohibit flight attendants from sleeping during *red eye* flights; flight attendants who are discovered violating these regulations can be terminated immediately. One method of staying awake is to gather in a galley and have a communal meal. The act of eating keeps flight

attendants alert; moreover, the communal meal contributes to crew coherence during the trip (i.e., a ‘team’ environment; cf. FAA 2004a). Note that the FA poster uses the first person plural token *us* when referring to the flight attendant crew, constructing the crew as discrete from other groups of aircraft occupants, i.e., passengers and pilots.

The FA poster’s actions in Lines 2-6 directly index stances of thoughtfulness and consideration for others, which is in keeping with institutional and occupational behavioural norms and expectations. Line 4 shows the FA poster being considerate not just to fellow crewmembers but also to passengers. The FA poster states the likelihood that all passengers were asleep, thus closing the galley curtain can be seen as a considerate gesture on the part of the flight attendant, keeping the galley light from shining into the dark cabin, which could potentially disturb sleeping passengers.

However, closing the galley curtain can also be seen as a selfish gesture in two ways. Firstly, the poster brought expensive food from home to share only with fellow flight attendants. Closing the curtain signifies that the ostensibly public space of the aircraft cabin is being divided, creating a temporary private space for flight attendants. The closed curtain can signify that passengers are not welcome. Secondly, the open galley curtain would allow light from the galley to shine into the cabin, as mentioned above. The unfiltered light and sound could disturb passengers and keep them from sleep. Sleeping passengers do not ring the flight attendant call button or request service from flight attendants. Thus it is in flight attendants’ personal interest to keep passengers asleep and undisturbed if flight attendants wish to have personal time and space on the aircraft during flights.

The FA poster draws on shared occupational and practical knowledge of cabin service standards in constructing the passengers as selfish and situationally unaware. Lines 12-14 contain several contextualization cues marking the actions of the passengers as violating standard behavioural norms. Line 12 links the *closed curtain* with a private, flight attendant-only space on the aircraft. *After we had just served a full meal service* draws on implicit service expectations in the aircraft cabin that after such a service passengers should not need additional food and drink. Lines 13, *expensive french cheese and toblerone chocolate*, and 14, *IN COACH* are motivated by the practical knowledge that economy cabin passenger service is basic, and does not extend to imported luxury food items such as those the FA poster had brought for flight attendant consumption. The post expresses surprise and anger that the passengers did not understand the many cues that communicated the expectation that passengers are to remain in their seats after a meal service, and to sleep on a red-eye flight. The post concludes with an evaluation that

the passengers who ate the expensive food had no manners or etiquette. This statement draws on a shared practical desire of flight attendants that passengers both display appreciation for the flight attendant job and show respect to flight attendants.

Indeed, the concept of respect is a pervasive topic in the forum discourse.

Example 5.11 contains such implicit talk of the desire for respect and the lack of respect that flight attendants feel passengers have for their status as flight attendant in Line 12.

Example 5.13 is explicit in the assertion about the lack of respect shown by a passenger toward flight attendants:

Example 5.13

1. We had a jackass who wouldn't turn off his phone recently,
2. and after repeated requests by me and the #1, the #1 got on the PA and announced exactly what was going on –
3. this man won't turn off his cell phone and we may have to go back to the gate.
4. The jeers at this guy from the passengers in f/c were overwhelming.
5. It was depressing though, that it took THAT, and not respecting our instructions or the law, to make him turn it off.

Line 1 constructs a separation between the flight attendant crew and passengers. *We had a jackass* sets up a dichotomy between flight attendants and non-flight attendants. As Line 1 continues, it draws on shared occupational knowledge about mobile phone use in the aircraft cabin before flight departure. Passengers are allowed to use their mobile phones until the announcement from the flight attendant that phones must be switched off. Thus Line 1 indicates that the passenger did not switch his phone off when the initial announcement was made. Line 2 constructs the flight attendants as powerless to control the passenger, which is contrary to conventional interactional norms between flight attendants and passengers (cf. Banks 1994; Whitelegg 2007).

In Line 3, the lead flight attendant in the crew makes an announcement to passengers explaining the predicament, drawing on their support to enforce a federal regulation that is the responsibility of flight attendants to enforce. The passenger is viewed as having little regard for the institutional authority of flight attendants, disregarding the many requests to comply with the federal regulations which flight attendants are responsible for enforcing. When the passenger does not comply, flight attendants draw on the collective power of the passengers to goad the rebel passenger into complying. Line 4 stands out for several reasons. We can infer that the non-compliant passenger was seated in first-class because of the relative configuration and length of the aircraft cabin. It is unlikely that the FA poster would have specifically mentioned first-class passengers if the non-compliant passenger were not seated in first-class as well. Due

to the length of the cabin, if the non-compliant passenger were seated in economy-class, it is unlikely that first-class passengers would have been aware of the situation. First-class seats are frequently occupied by business travelers, who, because they fly so often, have knowledge about inflight regulations and behavioural norms which casual travelers do not generally have. First-class passengers also have a special institutional status, sitting in privileged seats and receiving additional services and amenities. Thus the status of the passengers has some special meaning in this post. In the context of the incident being retold, the first-class passengers are constructed as having more power than flight attendants over the non-compliant passenger. Line 4 marks a frame shift from what is expected with respect to institutional authority on commercial flights (described in Lines 2 and 3) to the practical realities of some flights.

In the setting of commercial flight and the participant structures that are entailed, the transfer of power and institutional authority runs down the Chain of Command. Passengers are not included in the inflight hierarchy of the Chain of Command and therefore should have no institutional authority over other passengers. Yet in this example, first-class passengers are constructed as having more power than flight attendants. The post calls attention to this frame shift in Line 5 and links the non-compliance of the passenger to a lack of respect for either the flight attendants or the institutional authority which they represent (i.e., the FAA). Flight attendants in the crew are constructed as lacking the power to enforce the federal regulations they are ostensibly employed to do. The flight attendant crew shifts footing and aligns with passengers in order to achieve their goal of switching off and stowing the non-compliant passenger's mobile phone so that the plane could depart.

When there is a frame shift, as in the previous example, we can see how implicit certain passenger behavioural norms and expectations are. In Example 5.13, the unspoken behavioural norm was obeying directions from flight attendants. This particular example concerned a federal regulation, compliance of which was not an option. The passenger must either switch off his phone, or the plane cannot push back from the gate. In Example 5.14 there is a different behavioural norm being violated – one which does not have the same consequences as in Example 5.13.

Example 5.14

1. Once I laughed at a guy who wanted a fancy drink...
2. I wasn't even polite and tell him no.
3. I just LAUGHED and LAUGHED and LAUGHED and LAUGHED
4. and his friend said "this isn't a bar, you idiot"

The example draws on the shared occupational knowledge about interactional expectations between flight attendants and passengers during beverage services. The passenger in Line 1 is constructed as unaware of inflight service standards and his surroundings (contrasting with the flight attendant institutional expectation of situational awareness) to the point where his travelling companion shifts footing and aligns with the flight attendant. The example constructs the FA poster as violating a fundamental flight attendant behavioural interactional norm: treat the passenger with respect and politeness. Not only is the poster constructed as responding impolitely, Line 3 uses the rhetorical device of repetition to emphasise the poster's assessment of the passenger's lack of knowledge about inflight service expectations.

The inclusion in the post of the passenger's friend works to both emphasise the inappropriateness of the fancy drink request and also to mitigate the FA poster's response to the passenger's request. The FA poster is constructed as reacting to the passenger's inappropriate request in a potentially face-threatening manner. She acknowledges this in Line 2, saying she *wasn't even polite*. The word *even* indicates that being polite to passengers is the minimum behaviour which a flight attendant is expected to display. The potential face-threatening act is mitigated by the footing shift of the passenger's travelling companion. The implicit act sequence is: flight attendant asks for drink order; passenger requests drink; flight attendant complies with drink order. In this example, however, the sequence is altered, as well as the participant roles, and the passenger aligns with the flight attendant in the drink request exchange. What makes this particular interaction notable is the fact that the passenger did not comply with practical commercial aviation norms about passenger knowledge of inflight service amenities. In a different context, a person requesting a *fancy drink* from an ostensible customer service worker would not merit such a response (*I just LAUGHED and LAUGHED*, Line 3). However, in the context of the commercial aircraft cabin, where inflight services are being trimmed by airline management to save costs, the thought of serving *fancy drink* brings the FA poster to laughter.

The FA poster of Example 5.14 is constructed as violating a basic occupational norm, which is be polite to passengers. Yet the flight attendant publicly retells this incident. Recall that the forums are public discourse settings, where non-flight attendants can read posts. The post then serves as a lesson for future passengers: the aircraft cabin is not a bar; flight attendants are not waitresses. Example 5.15 contains a different violation of interactional norms.

Example 5.15

1. This story made the rounds many years ago.
2. Told by a [airline] crew sitting on the beach in HNL.
3. Obnoxious pax to female f/a - So waddya say to a little f**k?
4. female f/a - Piss off, little f**k!
5. Rumour had it she was fired.

Example 5.15 retells an interaction in which the passenger is reported as committing an unwanted sexual advance toward the female flight attendant. Though the passenger's gender is not stated, we can infer that he is male from the reconstructed dialogue in Line 3, which indexes hegemonic masculinity in its bald sexual advancement. The post does not state if the turn in Lines 3 and 4 occurred during a flight the flight attendant was working, but we can infer from Line 5 that it occurred whilst the female was in her institutional role of flight attendant and not away from work. By virtue of institutional and occupational behavioural expectations, the female flight attendant is constrained from responding in a manner that might be more acceptable in other contexts (e.g., social places where people visit to meet potential partners and dates). The passenger is granted fewer constraints in his discourse than the flight attendant by virtue of his institutional role as paying customer. In this example, the passenger is free to speak a sexual innuendo to the flight attendant, which may be interpreted as unwanted sexual harassment.

The FA reporter has aligned with the *female f/a* in Lines 1-4, signaled by referring to the passenger as *Obnoxious pax* (Line 3). Line 5 signals a frame shift. The FA reporter shifts footing away from the enjoyment of the story's punchline (signaled by the exclamation point at the end of Line 4). The FA reporter in Line 5 describes the consequences of responding inappropriately to such a comment as in Line 3 whilst working within institutional and occupational constraints on behaviour. Although Line 5 is hedged by the phrase *rumour had it*, the implicit ends of the utterance are to caution the primary audience of flight attendants against such utterances as in Line 4. Thus Example 5.15 reinforces institutionally sanctioned interactional norms: flight attendants are to be polite to passengers, irrespective of passenger behaviour (cf. Example 5.11).

I have argued that a distinction between flight attendants and non-flight attendants is created in some forum posts. We saw in Example 5.7 a flight attendant poster who acknowledged that flight attendants are sometimes passengers. Talk which 'bridges the divide' as in Example 5.7 is unusual in the forum discourse. Flight attendants frequently are passengers too, when they are non-revving (i.e., travelling as a non-revenue passenger using their travel benefits). Yet much of the forum discourse (both in my corpus and in contexts not included in my corpus) displays an erasure of these shared experiences (cf.

Irvine and Gal 2009). Example 5.16 represents a dominant attitude expressed in many forum posts toward passengers:

Example 5.16

1. oh geezzzz....
2. the picture of the jerks in the overhead...
3. as if that has NEVER been done.
4. Next time we tell them their bag doesn't fit, they'll be screaming "BUT I FIT IN THE OVERHEAD!"

Example 5.16 is written in response to photos from a passenger gathering in a chartered aircraft. One photo depicts a passenger lying in an overhead compartment. Line 1 signals exasperation or disgust. Line 2 refers to passengers using the insult *jerks*, which is unmitigated in the post. Use of this word to refer to passengers in an institutionally affiliated or sanctioned speech event (such as the safety reports discussed in Chapter 4) would violate situation-specific communicative norms (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986); its use here marks the post as written specifically for a non-institutionally sanctioned speech event with a primary audience of fellow flight attendants who share the FA poster's emotional reaction to the photo.

The words written in all capital letters in Lines 3 and 4 reflect CMC-related practices indicating emphasis or shouting. Line 4 constructs a fictional flight attendant being 'screamed at' by a fictional passenger in response to enforcement of institutional safety regulations. My fieldwork does not support this fictional construction; flight attendants are rarely 'screamed at' by passengers. However, this post does have a basis in reality: it is not uncommon for passengers to take frustrations out on flight attendants. Line 4 in the utterance can thus be interpreted as hyperbole. However, Line 4 is not only exaggeration but also is a means of aligning the FA poster with the primary audience of flight attendants who share the practical knowledge to interpret this post as both joke and in-group marker. Note in Line 4 that the FA poster does not mitigate or argue against their institutionally mandated task of enforcing carry-on luggage stowage requirements. The FA poster instead takes for granted that flight attendants engage routinely in this task and that there will be a hypothetical encounter similar to the fictional event told in Example 5.16.

Example 5.17 appears two posts later and is a direct response to Example 5.16:

Example 5.17

1. Maybe I am being naive, but i really don't think these folks are the ones who are rude and thankless to us on the airplane.
2. People who care enough to get this involved with the airline they pay to fly on I would think are a lot more respectful and nice to us than most.
3. ...They are doing the same things in those pics that most of us did in/after training.
4. [I'm] sure the trainers in the training center were probably thinking the same thing about us...
5. "Look at those jerks taking pictures standing in the engines of the 777.
6. JMO..
7. but the "jerk" comment was way out of line.

Example 5.17 picks up on the insult in Line 2 of Example 5.16; the FA poster uses it as a resource to align away from the FA poster of Example 5.16 yet align with other flight attendants by drawing on shared practical knowledge and experiences of flight attendant training. Many flight attendants in initial training and new-hire flight attendants are new to the aviation industry and have not learned the practices, ideologies, and occupational knowledge that distinguish flight attendants from non-flight attendants (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). Many flight attendants in initial training and new-hire flight attendants engage in activities such as climbing into the overhead compartment or sitting in a jet engine because they are able to by virtue of their privileged position as inflight aviation employees. Example 5.17 argues that the *jerk* passengers in Example 5.16 do the same activities which new flight attendants themselves have done during initial training. In drawing links from passenger behaviour to flight attendant behaviour, the FA poster of Example 5.17 can be seen as minimising differences between the flight attendant and passenger groups. Yet irrespective of the similarity of behaviour, Example 5.17 maintains a distinction between passengers and flight attendants.

Until now, we have seen posts that construct passengers as a homogeneous group. However, Example 5.17 distinguishes between different groups of passengers. Line 6 constructs the passengers (referred to Example 5.16 as *jerks*) as *a lot more respectful and nice to us than most [passengers]*. Thus the FA poster introduces an alternative type of passenger in addition to the construction of passengers as persons who are not flight attendants but with whom flight attendants share the aircraft cabin and for whom passengers must care, irrespective of how passengers treat flight attendants. Note that this attention to passengers conforms to occupational and institutional practices related to customer service. Despite Example 5.16's insult to passengers, the FA poster included in the post a reference to passenger care duties in the form of ensuring proper stowage of carryon bags. The reference is included almost imperceptibly, which reflects the internalisation of occupational practices. Example 5.17 is explicit in maintaining

passenger service standards, even in a discussion forum away from institutional and occupational oversight. That the FA poster of Example 5.17 stated these views in a public forum with a primary audience of her peers again reflects the internalisation of occupational and institutional demands with respect to passenger care. Example 5.17 could also be an example of the deep acting that Hochschild (2003) discusses. In her study, Hochschild argues that many flight attendants internalise such emotional labour demands as caring about passengers, who are, after all, complete strangers. This internalisation results in passenger care duties that happen without conscious thought. Example 5.17 also works to preserve the practical norm of solidarity (discussed above in Section 5.1) by hedges in Line 1 (*Maybe I am being naïve*) and Line 6 (*JMO* [Just My Opinion]). This hedge alludes to the practical norm of egalitarianism (also discussed in section 5.1). The FA poster of Example 5.17 is not asserting authority over other flight attendants but merely is stating their opinion.

Section summary

In this section I have discussed how flight attendants construct their relationships with passengers and negotiate passenger service tasks. Despite the forums being away from institutional and occupational authorities, the posts display flight attendants' knowledge and acceptance of passenger service duties. Thus flight attendants are publicly orienting to both safety and service duties in a speech event where such displays of occupational and institutional knowledge are not required by the primary audience in order to demonstrate membership, status, or prowess. In posts about passenger interaction and passenger service duties, flight attendants are reproducing occupational and institutional practices. Posts do not mitigate or deny passenger service tasks; indeed, many posts in my corpus which detail passenger interactions construct the flight attendant as the 'hero' of the situation (cf. Santino 1978), as in Example 5.11. Flight attendants who break out of this hero construction, or who do not behave within institutionally established parameters suffer consequences, as we saw in Example 5.15.

While flight attendants are constrained by current institutional and occupational behavioural expectations, passenger interaction is influenced by sociohistoric and stereotyped constructions of flight attendants as physically available to passengers (Barry 2007; Whitelegg 2007; cf. Example 5.1 above). Flight attendants now emphasise their contribution to aviation safety and security (as seen in Section 5.1, above), but passengers continue to perceive flight attendants as waitresses (as in Example 5.14) or available sexual objects (as in Example 5.15).

5.3 Pilots

In this section I address how the forum discourse constructs pilots, and how participants frame the flight attendant/pilot working relationship. The flight attendant/pilot working relationship exists in an institutionally implemented hierarchy (discussed in Chapter 3). However, previous research has argued that flight attendants at times mitigate this hierarchy by working to reframe the relationship as egalitarian or in familial terms (Clark 2007). Chapter 4 argued that there exists a tension between the institutional expectations of working together as a ‘team’ whilst at the same time working within the Chain of Command hierarchy, with the captain as ultimate authority over the aircraft and its contents (including passengers and flight attendants). The safety reports are written for a primary audience, and thus it is unsurprising that the reports do not attempt to mitigate the position of authority that pilots have via the Chain of Command hierarchy.

There are a number of differences between the speech events of the safety reports and the discussion forums, detailed in Chapter 2. A fundamental difference is primary audience: posts are written by flight attendants, for flight attendants. A second, almost equally important difference between the two speech events is institutional affiliation: forums are not sanctioned or affiliated with institutional authorities such as the FAA or airline employers. These two factors are important influences on forum discourse about pilots, and are reflected in posts.

Institutional influence is evident in posts that construct the flight attendant/pilot working relationship as a ‘team’, as Example 5.18 shows.

Example 5.18

1. Come on people give them a break we should be very proud of our pilots!
2. Strength in numbers
3. last I looked we are on the same team.

Example 5.18 comes in a discussion about an informational picket line of pilots, marching to demonstrate unity against their airline’s management in an effort to gain increased benefits in the upcoming contract negotiations. At the particular company for which the discussion participants work (and at most US airlines), pilots and flight attendants are represented by separate unions. In Line 1, the phrase *come on people* is an attention-getting device aimed at the primary audience of fellow flight attendants. In the phrase *give them a break*, the word *them* refers to pilots. This indirect command in Line 1 could be interpreted as directly indexing a stance of exclusion, with the words *we* and *our*

indicating flight attendants. However, this interpretation is not quite accurate when interpreted in the context of the post as a whole. Using *our* to refer to pilots can imply ownership or belonging. The FA poster could have said *the pilots*; instead she reframes the hierarchical flight attendant/pilot relationship as united by common goals (e.g., improved work rules and benefits).

Line 2 asserts that there is *strength in numbers*, indicating that flight attendants and pilots should work together as a ‘team’ outside of the context of inflight safety. Given the indirect command in Line 1, the FA poster is not merely stating a fact but instead is arguing for flight attendants to unite with pilots. The FA poster aligns with the primary audience of flight attendant forum participants in Line 1. In having established her footing, she can then in Line 2 call for flight attendants to join with pilots to create a larger employee group that would have more strength against management in times of collective bargaining. Note the distinction between flight attendants and pilots. Line 2 provides a reason for being *proud* of pilots, and in doing so, implies that flight attendants on their own do not have *strength*.

Line 3 mentions the idea of flight attendants and pilots being *on the same team*, drawing on the shared institutional knowledge that flight attendants and pilots are trained to work together as a team. The interpretation of *team* is ambiguous; it could refer to a united inflight crew, or it could mean the airline for which both flight attendants and pilots work. Recall that this *team* metaphor is also used by the FAA in their literature on CRM strategies (FAA 2004a; cf. Chapter 3). Yet the idea of a *team* can be inherently hierarchical, in that a team requires a leader who can make decisions and has authority to direct the team, discussed in Chapter 4. Line 3 also marks a frame shift, from making a distinction between the different occupational groups of flight attendants and pilots (indicated by the use of *we*, *our*, and *them*) to attempting to persuade fellow flight attendants to be proud of a group separate to them and having institutional authority and power over them. The FA poster advocates uniting with pilots to create a stronger *team* than flight attendants or pilots on their own. Yet the desire to unite with pilots indicates the status that pilots have in commercial aviation. The FA poster thus works to entice fellow flight attendants to embrace and borrow the institutional status and therefore *strength* of pilots, in order for flight attendants to be able to negotiate an improved employment contract.

The reframing of the hierarchical flight attendant/pilot relationship to a more egalitarian ‘team’ is not necessarily as explicit as it is in Example 5.18. Below, Example

5.19 draws on shared practical knowledge to describe the institutional power that pilots have in commercial aviation:

Example 5.19

1. Although, I don't think they are quite as bad at [airline], as I have been supported by pilots when pushing duty.
2. One time, we actually had a [airline] Captain, LAX-based, step out onto the jetway so that the agent couldn't slam the door shut while we were waiting for replacement f/a's.
3. Of course, I would not expect this to happen all the time, as it depends on the Captain (generally, the 737 and Airbus pilots are more militant).
4. Yet, I've found that sometimes by getting our Captain involved, it can be enough to rattle management's/scheduling's cages and get some attention when our own f/a efforts are conveniently being put off.

This example draws on shared practical and institutional knowledge to argue that flight attendants can at times use the power and institutional authority of the captain for their own benefit. For example, Line 2 uses the International Air Transport Association (IATA) code *LAX* to indicate the city at which the captain is based. The FA poster regards the pilot base as tellable, drawing on shared knowledge and stereotypes amongst this particular forum's members (the forum in which this post was made is aimed at employees of a specific US airline; thus *LAX-based* likely has particular contextual meaning amongst the primary audience). Line 3 refers to particular aircraft types (*the 737 and Airbus*) in differentiating different types of interaction and cooperation amongst pilots and flight attendants. This differentiation specifically draws on shared practical knowledge and experience: unlike flight attendants, who are qualified to work on several different aircraft types, commercial pilots are qualified to fly only one type of aircraft at a time. One result of this type-rating is pilots tend to be stereotyped by flight attendants according to aircraft type. The FA poster displays this knowledge, indicating that the post is written for a primary audience of flight attendant forum participants.

In Line 4 the FA poster draws on the institutional authority of the captain for her own benefit: *by getting our Captain involved, it can be enough to rattle management's/scheduling's cages*. Similar to Example 5.18, the captain is constructed as having more power than flight attendants in commercial aviation, so that in joining with pilots, flight attendants' own power is increased; thus flight attendants benefit from the borrowed power, status, and institutional authority of pilots, especially the *Captain*. The phrase *rattle management's/scheduling's cages* (Line 4) constructs pilots as having greater power than even airline management; flight attendants need the power of pilots in order to compel airline management and flight attendant crew scheduling to adhere to

institutional, contractual, and legal obligations. The poster does not mitigate the Chain of Command hierarchy. The captain is not reframed as brother or sister; the flight attendant/pilot relationship is not reconstructed as an inflight ‘family’, as some posts in my corpus do. Pilots are constructed as having power over other aviation employees (gate agents, Line 2; *management* and *scheduling*, Line 4). Note the appeal to institutional authority greater than flight attendants possess (discussed in Chapter 4): the FA poster retells a situation when she drew on the power and institutional authority of the captain for her and her colleagues’ benefit.

In drawing on shared practical and institutional experience, the FA poster aligns with flight attendants whilst at the same time reinforcing the hierarchical positions in which flight attendants and pilots are situated. Here, the poster is demonstrating the power and institutional authority of the captain as head of the Chain of Command, and is drawing on that power and authority for her own benefit. Like Example 5.18, this FA poster argues that the power that pilots are granted by virtue of their position in the Chain of Command can benefit flight attendants who have less power and institutional authority than pilots have (cf. Example 5.11).

Throughout Example 5.19 the FA poster uses a capital C when spelling ‘captain’ (Lines 2, 3, and 4), which infers that the captain is a unique position distinguished from *pilots* (not capitalised) and which orthographically reinforces the authority that the captain has by virtue of the Chain of Command hierarchy. Note that ‘flight attendants’ are abbreviated using lower case letters (Lines 2 and 4). In the context of this post, these spelling conventions reinforce the differences in status and hierarchical position of flight attendants and the *Captain*. Lines 2-4 directly index a stance of cooperation: flight attendants at times are supported by captains in the struggle for improved work conditions. The experience retold in Example 5.19 is contingent upon captains being willing to use their power and institutional authority for the benefit of flight attendants which, as we have seen in Chapter 4, does not always happen (cf. Examples 4.8 and 4.10). Example 5.19 is also contingent upon flight attendants recognising and accepting the greater power and institutional authority of the captain and being willing to use them for their benefit. Thus Lines 2-4 can indirectly index stances of powerlessness and deference: flight attendants themselves do not have enough power or institutional authority to enforce their own duty day limitations.

Example 5.19 uses institutional titles to display accommodation to and acceptance of Chain of Command hierarchy. This is one method. Example 5.20 accommodates to the Chain of Command hierarchy by drawing on practical knowledge and experience.

Example 5.20

1. This is Great News.
2. Don't get me wrong some of the younger guys are [a lot] of fun,
3. But It's the [experience] of the older senior guys that have been flying for decades that really puts me at ease when I step on an airplane to begin a trip.
4. They tend to be less open minded and maybe even a little [bigoted] (No, I Know Not All Of Them) compared to the younger models.
5. But it's their [experience] I count on to get me home in one piece!
6. [Whenever] there is young F/O and IRO⁶ on the flight deck and the captain goes on break, I always feel like telling them not to touch anything till the Capt. gets back.
7. LOL

Example 5.20 is written in response to a change in US law, allowing commercial pilots to work until the age of 65; previously, commercial pilots must retire at age 60. Lines 2 and 3 link *fun* with youth and thus with inexperience. *Older*, experienced pilots are generally captains (demonstrating shared practical knowledge; a prerequisite for achieving captain status is accruing a certain number of flight hours as a first officer). While *older*, more experienced pilots might not be as *fun* as the younger, inexperienced pilots, for the FA poster, experience trumps fun. The post asserts that experienced pilots are safer, trustworthier, and know their jobs better than inexperienced pilots. However, implicit in the post is the fact that flight attendants put their lives into the hands of pilots during every flight. Thus pilots have such power over flight attendants as to control whether they live or die. Indeed, Line 4 states that the FA poster relies on the experience of pilots to *get me home in one piece!*

Orientation to the Chain of Command hierarchy is evident in the post. The FA poster states that the *experience* of the more *senior* pilots puts her *at ease* when she steps on an airplane to begin a trip (Line 3). With this statement, the poster is constructed as less powerful than the pilots: pilots have the power to put her at ease. Lines 1-5 mention *older*, *senior guys* (Line 3) and *younger guys* (Line 2); Line 6 makes explicit the link between experience, age, and the rank of captain. The FA poster thus assumes a footing that is less powerful than and subordinate to older, senior pilots and captains who are above flight attendants in the Chain of Command hierarchy. Note the gender stereotyping of pilots: *the younger guys* (Line 2), *the older senior guys* (Line 3). The FA poster draws on shared practical knowledge that the majority of US pilots are male; additionally the poster displays knowledge of the practical communicative practice in referring to the

⁶ International Relief Officer, staffed in flight deck crews for operational needs with respect to pilot duty time and contractual rest.

pilots as *guys*, irrespective of gender. Many posts in my corpus use this gender-stereotyped term to refer to the non-gender specific occupation of pilots. My experience working as a flight attendant confirms that this is an accepted and regular discursive practice.

Line 6 is written in a joking key, evident by the contextualization cue *LOL* (used in CMC to mean either Lots Of Laughs or Laughing Out Loud) in Line 7. Line 6 also reinforces the Chain of Command hierarchy. When the captain leaves the flight deck, the head of the Chain of Command is physically removed from the flight deck. The second in command is the first officer, but he is still not the absolute authority on the aircraft; that is the role of the captain. Thus the poster draws on this shared knowledge of the Chain of Command hierarchy in her joke that the younger first officer and relief pilots (*IRO*, Line 6) do not have sufficient experience to safely fly the aircraft, and must therefore wait for the captain (who is more experienced and possesses greater authority than the first officer) to return to the flight deck in order to safely pilot the aircraft.

The control that pilots have over flight attendants' lives is a salient topic of discussion. We saw in Example 5.20 that older and more experienced pilots seem safer than younger, inexperienced pilots. Example 5.21 describes the fact that pilots are in command of the aircraft as a whole, including the lives of flight attendants:

Example 5.21

1. However I hate the way flight attendants get when pilots ask for something and flight attendants get all pissy.
2. They are stuck up there, flying the plane, have your life and everyone's lives in their hands, yet if they want something, your hear flights attendants say to "serve themselves", or point to where things are.
3. Get [your] lazy ass up and get them something to eat, its not that serious.
4. We often hate the struggle that we have between us and gate agents, yet we do the same thing with the pilots?
5. Our job is too [damn] easy to be throwing attitude around.
6. I [definitely] don't take that crap and will tell you like it is.

Line 1 refers to the act of pilots requesting drinks or food from flight attendants (*when pilots ask for something*). The primary audience of flight attendant forum participants shares the knowledge that some flight attendants resent the part of their job that requires serving beverages or meals to pilots (evident in Example 5.23, below). Line 2 expands on the assertion in Line 1, describing the life-and-death power that pilots have over flight attendants (similar to Example 5.20, above). The word *something* in Line 2 is again used to index food or beverages, referring to the service tasks of flight attendants. Line 3 continues orienting to these service tasks, and contains a face-threatening act, calling

fellow flight attendants *lazy* if they do not respond to requests from pilots for beverages or food. Requests from pilots can also be reframed as orders, owing to pilots' hierarchical position above flight attendants. In other words, because pilots are above flight attendants in the Chain of Command hierarchy, an utterance that in a different context could be interpreted as a request can in the structure of the flight attendant/pilot dyad be interpreted as an order by virtue of the authority that pilots have over flight attendants.

Line 4 constructs employee group boundaries: *us and gate agents*, flight attendants and pilots. Thus the utterance approaches flight attendant/pilot interaction with the belief that they are not a united group, but instead two separate groups. These distinctions between employee groups are shared practical knowledge, but not common knowledge to those who do not work in commercial aviation. This separation goes against institutional training (i.e., CRM) which stresses inflight crew unity in the form of a single 'team' (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

The FA poster begins the post by aligning away from flight attendants, which does not necessarily equate to aligning with pilots; however, in this post the FA poster does align with pilots. The poster refers to pilots' isolation in the flight deck and the power they have over flight attendants and passengers. She distances herself from other flight attendants in Lines 1 and 2, in referring to *flight attendants* (not 'we') in Line 1 and *flight attendants* (not 'us') in Line 2. Line 3 distances the FA poster from her colleagues in the contextual insult *lazy*, which is an accusation made when flight attendants feel that their coworkers are not fulfilling their occupational and institutional tasks to the fullest extent (or to the satisfaction of the accuser).

Line 4 marks a footing shift, when the poster uses *we* to include herself with other flight attendants. The alignment strengthens by drawing on shared practical knowledge about interactions between flight attendants and gate agents. Line 5 marks another footing shift, away from aligning with flight attendants who have the approach to pilot service described in Line 2. Despite including herself with the primary audience (*Our job*), Line 5 is written in a hostile key (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2), indicated by the phrases *too damn easy* and *throwing attitude around*. It is unclear if the FA poster is aligning with pilots as in Lines 1-3. The phrases *lazy ass* (Line 3), *too [damn] easy* (Line 5), and *that crap* (Line 6) contribute to the production of a direct indexical stance of antagonism toward other flight attendants. The final phrase of the utterance, *[I] will tell you like it is* (Line 6), is an indirect challenge to flight attendant solidarity and is the culmination of the antagonistic stance indexed in the utterance.

This type of threat to solidarity is rare to see in the forum discourse; I rarely witnessed it during my time as a flight attendant. A core flight attendant community norm is solidarity: stick together against non-flight attendants, discussed in Section 5.1. For a flight attendant to threaten solidarity in such an explicit manner signifies that she feels strongly about something more than flight attendant solidarity. In the forum discourse there are few topics about which participants feel more strongly than community solidarity; one is the part that flight attendants have in maintaining and improving aviation and inflight safety and security. Thus a motivating force behind Example 5.21 is the desire both for self-preservation and for the safety of the aircraft and passengers. Line 2 describes the vital role that pilots have in ensuring the safety of passengers and crew. The distilled argument of the utterance is: pilots are more important than flight attendants in ensuring the safety of passengers and crew; pilots cannot leave the flight deck; flight attendants are responsible for ensuring pilot comfort and safety; thus flight attendants need to fulfill that part of their job. The FA poster is thus enacting a safety role (recall Chapter 4 highlighted one theme of the safety reports was a ‘what if’ approach to incidents). The poster is so concerned with aviation safety that she is willing to threaten flight attendant solidarity in order to achieve it.

Thus far in this section I have discussed posts which have oriented positively to the flight attendant/pilot working relationship and the Chain of Command hierarchy, either by using mitigation strategies to reframe the hierarchical relationship into an ostensibly egalitarian one (as in Example 5.18); by drawing on the institutional authority of the captain in order to benefit flight attendants (as in Example 5.19); or by accepting and describing the literal and institutional power that pilots have over flight attendants (as in Examples 5.20 and 5.21).

As argued in Chapter 4, framing the flight attendant/pilot working relationship as a ‘team’ can imply solidarity and equality amongst all ‘team’ members. However, in the forums this ‘team’ conceptualisation is open for negotiation. There are few posts in the forum data that positively orient to the ‘team’ conceptualisation. Instead, many posts pick up on the flight attendant/pilot ‘team’ concept, and argue strongly that it is an inaccurate frame based on the realities of the industry, as demonstrated in Example 5.22.

Example 5.22

1. If we were on the same team.
2. They would not go ahead and ratify a contract when we vote ours down.
3. If we were on the same team, then they wouldn’t allow the main cabin door to be closed, and the a/c be pushed off the gate because we are approaching a legality issue.

4. In other words, we can't go illegal.
5. If we were on the same team, they would understand that we are not short order cooks at their beck and call whenever they are hungry.
6. If we were on the same team, they would understand that they will get fed after all of the passengers, and the FA's have had a chance to pick from the leftovers.
7. I could go on.

Example 5.22 is in the same thread as Example 5.18 and is a response to the assertion in Example 5.18 that flight attendants and pilots are on the same team. The FA poster establishes a footing away from a united inflight crew of pilots and flight attendants, and aligns with fellow flight attendants in arguing that pilots and flight attendants are not *on the same team*. The post begins with a rhetorical prelude *If we were on the same team*. Line 1 can be seen as the thesis of the post. It is repeated three times after Line 1, each time used as the opening phrase of a line which calls attention to reasons why pilots and flight attendants cannot realistically be seen as *on the same team*. Line 2 draws on differences in trade unions and employment contracts discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The message of Line 2 is that pilots and flight attendants should stick together when negotiating new labour contracts; the reality is that they do not. The FA poster constructs pilots as purposefully distancing themselves excluded from flight attendants.

Line 3 recalls an issue similar to that reported in Example 4.20 in Chapter 4, namely, the captain ordering the aircraft door to be closed so that the flight attendant crew cannot leave despite their legal duty day ending. These sorts of legality issues are the cause of many disagreements and negative feelings toward pilots from flight attendants. Line 3 demonstrates the Chain of Command hierarchy: pilots have the power and institutional authority to control the actions of flight attendants. Line 4 refers to this control, using the occupational jargon *go illegal*. This phrase does not mean committing a crime; instead it refers to working beyond duty limitations put in place by the FAA.

Line 5 refers to the shared practical knowledge and experience of flight attendants providing food and beverage services to pilots. Line 5 contains the contextualization cue *short order cooks* which indicates the line is written using hyperbole to make a serious point. The primary audience of fellow flight attendants understands that flight attendants are not literally *short order cooks*; however, they frequently feel that pilots place unfair demands on them with respect to passenger service and pilot service duties. During my time as a flight attendant, it became clear to me that flight attendants are often frustrated that pilots request beverages and meals during times when flight attendants are busiest carrying out passenger service duties, or when flight attendants themselves are trying to eat. Line 6 refers to a related issue with food service. Meals for crewmembers are less

common now than in the past (due to airline cost-saving measures being implemented). Yet pilots still at times request food from flight attendants, often in the guise of ‘leftover food’ from passenger service. It is practical knowledge that flight attendants have first choice on leftover passenger meals; surplus food is offered to pilots only after it has been offered to flight attendants. This does not stop pilots from requesting food, however, and many flight attendants complain that pilot requests for food come during times when flight attendants are busy with passenger service duties, as stated above.

The post ends with a similar rhetorical phrase as Line 1, *I could go on*. The assertion draws on the FA poster’s experiences as a flight attendant and working with pilots. The message of Line 7 is that the poster has several more reasons why pilots and flight attendants are not *on the same team*, but respects forum protocol and interactional norms that disprefer overly long posts. The Chain of Command hierarchy frames and is heightened in Example 5.22. The FA poster approaches the flight attendant/pilot working relationship with a clear idea that they are two groups, and makes several statements that support this idea. Yet the poster does not mitigate pilots’ institutional authority over flight attendants. In Line 3, for example, the poster describes the power pilots have to control flight attendants’ movements (*they wouldn’t allow the main cabin door to be closed*). Line 5 implies that flight attendants work under the authority of pilots and are obliged to respond to pilots’ requests for food and beverage service. Thus, even when flight attendants disagree with the power that pilots have over them, they do not mitigate it.

This disagreement without mitigation can be seen in Example 5.23, a post inviting forum participants to debate flight attendants’ expected and mandated service duties towards pilots.

Example 5.23

1. Correct me if I am wrong but it is not listed in our job responsibility to wait on the pit.
2. I just worked a transcon and when we [were] doing sundaes the pit called and said they needed a bathroom break.
3. Of course no problem.
4. The back had just finished their service and we were nearly finished with ours.
5. When one of the flight attendants went up to the pit while the f/o was in the bathroom the Captain scolded her for not checking on them enough.
6. He told her he was going to tell her but he would also explain to the rest of the crew that it was in our job description to take care of them and to check on them every 30 minutes during our flights.
7. WHAT?
8. Now, of course I always take care of the guys but they come second I believe my job is taking care of the cabin and pax.

9. Of course I know that we are responsible for making sure they get their bathroom breaks but I am not going to interrupt service so I can check on them every 30 minutes.
10. He said the rule is every 30 minutes but he would be okay with every hour, never more than an hour.
11. When he came out to use the lav he started to scold me like he is the big bad captain and I should worship him.
12. I do respect he is the captain so I would never tell him off but I am going to politely disagree with him and he is not going to intimidate me.
13. I [calmly] explained to him I disagreed and it was not in my job description and I need to take care of the pax first.
14. I explained how much more of service there is on a transcon first class and we honestly had not stopped moving and had not had a chance to call them yet.
15. He said you need to check on us every 30 minutes, taking care of us is your JOB and part of your job description and told me to calm down (I was totally calm).
16. He could not stand the fact [that] I spoke up to him like he was a God Captain.
17. Am I wrong?
18. I never ever heard of this.
19. The F/O later apologized and said he [thought] the captain was wrong and some captains are just a**w*oles!
20. Thoughts?

Example 5.23 draws on shared occupational and practical knowledge of service tasks, in-group discursive cues, and jargon to retell an interaction with a captain and first officer. The FA poster asks participants in the forum if they concur with her opinion that it is not the responsibility of flight attendants to serve pilots (Line 1) at the expense of passengers (Line 9).

In Line 2, the FA poster states that she had *just worked a transcon*, which is practical jargon indicating a transcontinental flight. Use of *transcon* here is a contextualization cue. A *transcon* flight is from one coast of the US to the other, for example Los Angeles to New York. *Transcon* flights are generally six hours long; many airlines use a narrow body aircraft (with one aisle) for these flights as they use less fuel than wide body aircraft (with two aisles). Narrow body aircraft are not as easy as wide body aircraft for flight attendants to work, as there is a lot more manoeuvring and shifting of service trolleys and bodies (passengers and flight attendants asking to get past, for example). Narrow body aircraft can also feel more claustrophobic and enclosed than a wide body. Moreover, a *transcon* flight operates across three time zones, which can be disruptive to body clocks and sleep cycles, even if the flight attendant is used to working such flights or has taken preparatory measures such as napping before the flight. Thus, use of *transcon* in Line 2 provides the primary audience of fellow flight attendants a contextualization cue for understanding the workplace context in which the incident reported in the post is situated.

The FA poster writes in Line 2 that *we [were] doing sundaes*. From this phrase we can unpack the location of the flight attendant and approximate time after takeoff when the incident occurred. *Doing sundaes* refers to service dessert in the first-class cabin. This service is an aisle service, done for each individual passenger (instead of every passenger receiving the same dessert on the same tray setup, the flight attendant asks each passenger how he or she would like their sundae, and serves it accordingly). This type of service can be time-consuming depending on the number of first-class passengers are being served and the number of flight attendants are working in the first-class cabin doing the meal service. Nonetheless, this phase of meal service generally occurs approximately two to two and a half hours after takeoff.

The FA poster shifts footing a number of times throughout the post. Initially, she assumes a footing orienting to the Chain of Command hierarchy. The poster refers to the pilots by their institutional ranks (*the f/o*, or first officer, and *the Captain*, Line 5). Despite describing the captain's behaviour in unfavourable terms (signified by the word *scolded*), the FA poster nonetheless uses the institutionally appropriate job title of *Captain* (note the capitalisation; cf. Example 5.19). Line 7 signals a footing shift, which continues into Lines 8 and 9. In these lines the FA poster shifts footing away from acceptance of the Chain of Command hierarchy and the pilots' position above her in authority. She instead mitigates the importance of her pilot service duties, instead promoting her passenger service duties. In Line 11, the FA poster shifts footing and constructs the captain as a menacing force (*the big bad captain*, using the alliterative construction *big bad*, alluding to the fairy tale character of the Big Bad Wolf); and as a deity (*I should worship him*). The deity reference is repeated in Line 16. The change in referring terms (from institutionally appropriate job title to hyperbole indicating abuse of power and authority) indicates the footing shift.

Lines 12-14 mark a frame shift. The lines are written in an objective key (Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2). The FA poster is constructed as deferential to the captain, hardworking, and selfless: an idealised flight attendant. This idealised construction, however, contrasts with Lines 16-19, in which the FA poster's footing is defiant against the captain's authority. This defiant footing (which violates her own, less authoritative, position in the Chain of Command) is justified and authorised by the first officer (i.e., the second in the Chain of Command) who is constructed as aligning with the FA poster and mitigating the captain's authority (*he thought the captain was wrong and some captains are just a**w*oles!*, Line 19).

Lines 11 and 16 draw on hyperbolic representations of power to construct the captain as exercising more power than the FA poster feels is appropriate. The hyperbolic constructions, however, are grounded in the Chain of Command hierarchy, which grants to pilots power over flight attendants via the institutional authority with which their positions in the Chain of Command are imbued. At times it can appear to flight attendants that pilots are abusing this power and institutional authority, as we saw in Examples 4.8 and 4.20. These hyperboles are employed for the benefit of the primary audience, who are the FA poster's peers. Recall that the primary audience of the safety reports (discussed in Chapter 4) rank above flight attendants in institutional authority. In contrast, the primary audience of the discussion forums are fellow flight attendants who share practical experience of similar misuses of pilots' power and institutional authority. Indeed, Line 1 of Example 5.23 ostensibly invites correction of improper service practices, but in the context of the post and broader speech event, assumes a footing of expert flight attendant, inviting fellow flight attendants to critique the captain's behaviour (Lines 19 and 20).

The construction of the captain can be contrasted with how the FA poster constructs herself. The poster uses the phrase *of course* (Lines 3, 8, 9) which demonstrates knowledge of flight attendant duties with respect to pilot service. In Line 12, the poster says *I do respect he is the captain* which displays awareness of the Chain of command hierarchy. Twice she states that she was calm (Lines 13 and 15), in contrast to the construction of the captain as scolding her (Line 11), as a parent might do a naughty child. Moreover, the poster is constructed as giving primacy to passenger service practices, as in Line 8 (*I believe my job is taking care of the cabin and [passengers]*) and Line 13 (*I need to take care of the [passengers] first*). The FA poster is thus constructed as calm, respecting the captain and his position of authority, and primarily focused on her passenger service duties. This calm construction is in contrast to the captain's aggression. The flight attendant respects the authority established by virtue of the Chain of Command, despite the captain scolding her as a parent would a child. She is focused on her professional duties of passenger service; this construction of professionalism contrasts with the captain's implied demand that she interrupt her service to provide service to the pilots.

With respect to the phrase *bathroom break* (Line 2), it can be argued that this practice (institutionally mandated via the post-9/11 enhanced inflight security measures) provides flight attendants some measure of power over pilots. These enhance security measures stipulate that there must be at least two people in the flight deck at all times when the aircraft is in operation. As most commercial aircraft now require only two pilots

to operate and fly the aircraft, it is frequently necessary for a flight attendant to enter the flight deck to allow a pilot to go to the toilet. Yet flight attendants are frequently busy with their passenger service duties, as Example 5.23 describes in Lines 8, 9, 13, and 14. Relieving a pilot for a toilet break requires coordination of passenger and pilot service duties, which can be stressful on aircraft which are staffed with minimum flight attendant crew and which have a full passenger complement (a common situation in US commercial aviation).

The post displays occupational and practical knowledge of passenger service practices a number of times (Lines 2, 4, 8, 9, 13, 14), which works to directly index a stance of professionalism. I suggest that this also can indirectly index a confrontational stance when in the context of this retold interaction. The FA poster is admonished by the captain to be more attentive to the needs of the pilots. The FA poster calls attention to her passenger service duties, arguing that they have primacy over pilot service duties. The poster uses these passenger service duties as a strategy in the confrontation with the captain, and emerges having one-upped the captain (*the F/O later apologized and said he [thought] the captain was wrong*, Line 19). Thus, despite the captain being the ultimate onboard authority, he is not infallible. The apology by the first officer, and admission that the captain was wrong, not only supports the assertions of the FA poster that she was correct in her actions (Lines 1, 13), but also lends institutionally authoritative support to her construction of the captain.

Note that Example 5.23 constructs the inflight crew of flight attendants and pilots as violating the institutional practice of working together as a ‘team’ (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). Instead of the captain being a leader of the inflight ‘team’ in whom flight attendants have confidence, the unity of the inflight crew breaks down. The captain in Example 5.23, thus, is constructed as aggressive toward his flight attendant crew, and likened to a fairy tale villain and a deity. Yet the authority of the captain as head of the Chain of Command is not questioned in the utterance. Indeed, Line 12 describes the *respect* that the flight attendant gives the captain, by virtue of his position as head of the Chain of Command.

The idea that captains deserve respect by virtue of their position of head of the Chain of Command is evident in Example 5.24.

Example 5.24

1. Just got off a trip with a captain, called back during a very easy, quiet night flight wanting a bathroom break.
2. Asked where we were in the service.

3. I said about halfway through the second service.
4. "Second service?" he asked obviously miffed.
5. I said yeah, can you wait ten minutes, we'll be done.
6. He got all huffy and said "well, I really can't wait, you should call us after the first service, I need to go NOW".
7. What a baby!
8. I proceeded to call up front to the "A" to tell her to "remind" the captain to include this bit of "dire" information in his briefing next time since all we got was "standard" brief,
9. (I then immediately told her face to face it was just for the eavesdropping pilots benefit)
10. Most pilots I have flown with don't have a time table when we are suppose to call them, on such an easy flight.
11. (it was a little bumpy at first, probably delayed our first bar cart by 15 minutes, then about 15-20 minutes for first cart.
12. Probably 15 minutes total for second cart to be completed.)
13. But what babies!
14. At least the captain.
15. And as captain of the flight, did he not get my name, as I always give it when I answer the phone?
16. Did he not recall I was aft galley, really not responsible for his drinks, breaks, etc, but had already called up there beforehand asking if they needed bottles of water or whatever else.
17. Respect?
18. You bet I respect you for your job of getting us there safely.
19. Other than that, it's a two way street, Buddy.
20. And if you think, with the age of Internet, with me seeing everything you put out there and how little you really think of your brethren, the FAs, once you get me on the ground in one piece, i want NOTHING to do with you.

Example 5.24 is similar to Example 5.23 in incident (pilots demanding flight attendant time which then requires flight attendants to disrupt their passenger service duties) as well as use of hyperbole to construct the captain. However, Example 5.24 provides a complete discounting of the captain as authoritative and powerful head of the Chain of Command, who instead is constructed as helpless and demanding (*What a baby!*, Line 7). The FA reporter is framed as hard-working and attentive to institutional and occupational practices (e.g., Lines 15 and 16). Moreover, the FA reporter aligns with fellow flight attendants both in the crew (Line 9) and in the primary audience of forum participants, evident from the footing which does not shift throughout the example but instead remains defiant against the captain and his authoritative position above flight attendants.

Unlike Example 5.23, the FA poster in Example 5.24 does not draw on the institutional authority of the first officer to support her assertions and assessment of the captain's behaviour. Instead, the post relies on practical experience shared by the FA poster and primary audience to substantiate the construction of the captain. Lines 1 and 10 refer to an *easy flight*, a contextualization cue indicating no passenger-related and

minimal turbulence-related incidents occurred during the flight causing inflight services to be delayed. The captain's inappropriate reaction is further enhanced and supported by the FA poster detailing the care and service she had already provided him, despite such service not being her primary responsibility (Line 16).

Thus, the FA poster uses her own authority, stemming from experience and justified by the inappropriate behaviour of the captain, to reject the captain's authority as head of the Chain of Command, and indeed reject any association with pilots (Line 20). However, note in Lines 8 and 9 that the FA poster states she is aware that pilots can overhear conversations on the cabin interphone, and uses this information to speak to the captain via the presence of speaking to her coworker. She then states the true motivation for the phone conversation via face-to-face communication with her colleague. This awareness of audience speaks to the considerable and pervasive power of the captain and his authority as the head of the Chain of Command. The FA poster did not say to the captain the words that she said to the "A" flight attendant (i.e., lead flight attendant who is responsible for coordinating communication between pilots and the flight attendant crew). Instead she followed prescribed institutional channels of communication, using the "A" flight attendant as a filter for what was said *just for the eavesdropping pilots benefit* (Line 9). Despite the captain violating the same institutional channels of communication (which dictate that the captain coordinate communication primarily with and via the lead flight attendant), the FA poster includes in the post that she followed procedure which the captain did not. Thus the FA poster draws on institutional communicative expectations and practical behavioural realities to construct the captain as an inappropriate head of the Chain of Command by virtue of his behaviour (*what babies! At least the captain*, Lines 13 and 14). This presentation of the captain contrasts with the FA poster who during the flight is attentive to institutional and occupational communicative and behavioural expectations, going beyond what is required of the position she is working on the aircraft (e.g., Line 16). She then uses the virtual space of the forums, with a primary audience of her peers, to mitigate the hierarchical and authoritative position the captain occupies as head of the Chain of Command (Line 20). Yet in this mitigation, the FA reporter nonetheless acknowledges that the position of pilot (charged with maintaining cabin, passenger, and crew safety) deserves the *respect* of flight attendants (Line 18). Thus institutional interactional expectations have influence despite the explicit rejection of the Chain of Command.

Examples 5.23 and 5.24 offer extreme examples of flight attendants in effect challenging the authority and power that pilots have over them by virtue of the Chain of

Command. Example 5.25 contains a less explicit mitigation of this institutional authority and power:

Example 5.25

1. But I wouldn't do [it] on “orders” by the flight deck
2. (they aren't supervisors when the plane is parked)
3. and I like the idea of telling them to go dump the lav because it shows full.

This example is part of a thread discussing actions by pilots which flight attendant participants feel are abuses of pilots' power and institutional authority. The FA poster is responding to an earlier post criticising a pilot who has ordered a flight attendant to clean an aircraft while the aircraft is parked on the ground. In Line 1 the FA poster places quote marks around *orders*, marking the words as salient in the context in which the action is situated (on an aircraft which is not in flight). Line 2 explains the highlighting of *orders* in Line 1, that commands given by pilots to flight attendants whilst the aircraft is not flying will not be heeded. However, flight attendants are bound to follow *orders* given to them by pilots whilst the aircraft is in flight because of the Chain of Command hierarchy, placing pilots above flight attendants in authority. Thus Line 2 reinforces pilots' position over flight attendants in the Chain of Command hierarchy.

Line 3 states that the FA poster enjoys giving an order to pilots. The phrase *dump the lav* in Line 3 is a contextualization cue. Aircraft lavatories contain holding tanks which fill with waste as the lavatories are used throughout a flight. There are various indications that these tanks are full; one indication is a disruption of service in the flushing capacity of the toilet. Another indication is located in the flight deck; however, flight attendants may notice before pilots that lavatory tanks are reaching capacity due to flight attendants' workplace being the aircraft cabin where the lavatories are located. While the phrase *dump the lav* is not the institutional name of the task, it is the practical term used by aviation workers (e.g., flight attendants, pilots, mechanics). Pilots, not flight attendants, are responsible for verifying that lavatory tanks are emptied when required; thus, pilots give the order to *dump the lav*. Yet the FA poster in Line 3 states that she *likes the idea of telling them to go dump the lav*, inverting the Chain of Command hierarchy by giving an order to a pilot. Flight attendants can request things from pilots which is different from ordering them to do tasks. Requests do not necessarily have to be filled; orders are expected to be obeyed. Example 5.25 thus makes use of the shared institutional and practical knowledge about aircraft operations and the Chain of Command to construct

the FA poster as inverting the hierarchical workplace relationship between flight attendants and pilots through her discursive actions.

Section summary

Posts in the forums demonstrate occupational and practical knowledge and understanding of the realities of working with pilots in commercial aviation. While flight attendants are trained to view their workplace interaction with pilots as a 'team' construct, this section has demonstrated that away from aircraft, flight attendants view pilots and their working relationship with pilots through a range of lenses. This variation contrasts with the reports discussed in Chapter 4, which construct pilots according to institutional and occupational expectations.

Instead of the idealised construction of the inflight 'team', desired and promoted by Crew Resource Management (CRM) training, posts that discuss pilots and flight attendant interactions with pilots demonstrate a range of footings taken up by FA posters. At times, posts display acceptance of the 'team' concept (Examples 5.18 and 5.19). Other posts are explicit in refuting the institutional construction of the idealised inflight 'team', demonstrating real-world experiences whereby pilots have contravened flight attendant legalities (Example 5.22). There are posts that draw on hyperbole (Examples 5.23 and 5.24) to show that not every flight attendant accepts and agrees with the Chain of Command hierarchy and their respective positions in it. Some posts demonstrate that flight attendants can use the Chain of Command for their own benefit (Example 5.19). Others give primacy to the role that pilots play in aviation safety (Examples 5.20 and 5.21). What the posts discussed in this section demonstrate is that the Chain of Command hierarchy remains a pervasive influence on forum discourse regarding pilots.

5.4 Situated identity: Beyond safety and service

Throughout the chapter we have seen posts composed by flight attendants describing flight attendant-related topics and which are influenced by commercial aviation. The forum posts reflect topics that are salient to flight attendants themselves, as opposed to topics with constraints placed on them in a speech event by non-participants (e.g., the safety reports discussed in Chapter 4). Posts in the forums demonstrate knowledge of institutional, occupational, and practical workplace practices. Recall that identity has been theorised as the outcomes of the social semiotics of practice, indexicality, ideology, and performance (see Figure 1.1 on page 19 in Chapter 1 for a visual incarnation of the Bucholtz and Hall 2004 identity framework). In this subsection, I discuss the relation that

these practices have with the forum-specific indexical stances, ideologies, and performance, and the situated identity that emerges from the posts.

Institutional, occupational, and real-world practices are discursively reproduced, indicating their salience to flight attendant forum participants. Throughout the chapter we have seen, for example, that forum participants debate the importance of safety and service tasks, drawing on real-world examples to support their arguments (e.g., Example 5.5). Some flight attendants dismiss the importance of service tasks to aviation safety when service involves pilots, as we saw in Examples 5.23 and 5.24. Yet service tasks are a fundamental part of the flight attendant job, which is demonstrated in the data through the many posts which discuss service practices, either willingly embracing them as part of the job (e.g., Examples 5.2 and 5.7) or openly discussing the minutiae of repeated service practices with real-world passengers as opposed to the idealised world of training, where conflicts may occur in a controlled environment (e.g., Example 5.6).

The realities of passenger service demonstrate that flight attendants are less united of a group than the safety reports may suggest. That is, the erasure of differences (cf. Irvine and Gal 2009) between flight attendants is not as prominent in the discussion forum posts as in the safety reports, with some posts contradicting or arguing against practices described in previous posts (e.g., Examples 5.16 and 5.17). Interaction and debate amongst flight attendant participants about occupational practices and real-world experiences show that there are a range of practices which flight attendants do. Some of these practices adhere closely to institutional and occupational expectations (e.g., Example 5.1); other practices are not institutionally sanctioned but instead emerge from on the job experience (e.g., Examples 5.13 and 5.14).

Discussion of practices creates indexical stances toward them and toward peer- and professional participants. While the safety reports predominantly created stances of professionalism and seriousness, forum posts create stances of joking and camaraderie (Examples 5.8 and 5.19), flight attendant as ‘hero’ (Example 5.11; cf. Santino 1978), and antagonism (e.g., Examples 5.12, 5.16, and 5.23). These indexical stances are created as a result of the discourse setting and primary audience. The forums are away from explicit institutional scrutiny⁷; participants are primarily fellow flight attendants who share the same job (cf. Section 5.1, above, ‘we all do the same job’) and related experiences. Thus it is unsurprising that such indexical stances expand beyond institutional expectations

⁷ Because the forums are public, it is possible that representatives from institutional authorities such as the FAA and airline management read the posts. This possibility is explicitly acknowledged in a minority of posts, most of which are written in a joking key, which allude to the unlikelihood that institutional authorities will take action against any forum participant as a result of a post.

stemming from idealised flight attendants. The indexical stances created in the forum posts instead reflect the realities of the job, and the real-world flight attendants who are, after all, human beings with human responses. Moreover, indexical stances of antagonism reflect unpleasant experiences, such as the incident discussed in Example 5.11. The flight attendant is constructed as calm (Line 4) and maintaining passenger service standards despite the passenger's behaviour (Line 6). The passenger throws a soiled diaper at the flight attendant, yet the flight attendant is a 'hero' who triumphs in the end, by drawing on the institutional authority of the captain to arrange for security to detain the passenger (Line 12); the passenger is constructed as the opposite of the calm and considerate flight attendant, who needs guidance on how to behave in the public space of an aircraft cabin.

These stances produce ideologies of solidarity and opposition; we can say it is a 'team' ideology (e.g., Examples 5.3; 5.16 and 5.17). This 'team' ideology is in keeping with institutional training (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4). This 'team' ideology can be seen in Example 5.3, with the overt construction of flight attendants separate from pilots, yet both groups are constructed as one (*OUR job ... THEY F#(k up theirs!!!!)*): flight attendants are a 'team' who have to clean up the mess when pilots make mistakes. Examples 5.16 and 5.17 provide a different 'team', whereby differences in flight attendant attitudes toward passenger behaviour result in one flight attendant disagreeing with another (Example 5.17). Yet the potential threat to solidarity is mitigated by the hedges *Maybe I am being naïve* (Line 1) and *JMO* (Just My Opinion, Line 10). Moreover, the 'team' of flight attendants is still maintained by describing the experience of initial training through which all flight attendants have lived.

The Chain of Command ideology, discussed in Chapter 4, is also produced in the forum posts, most explicitly in the posts in Section 5.3. For example, some posts use lexical denotation of the captain's status as head of the Chain of Command (e.g., Example 5.19); others use the captain and his or her concomitant institutional authority to substantiate a flight attendant's assessment or assertion (e.g., Examples 5.8 and 5.9; Example 5.11). Even posts which work to mitigate or reject the captain's status as head of the inflight hierarchy are framed by and reproduce the Chain of Command ideology. Example 5.24 constructs the captain as the opposite of an authority figure (Line 7) yet still maintains a deferential stance towards the captain in following recognised institutional communicative channels and speaking to the lead and not stating her thoughts directly to the captain (Lines 8 and 9). Moreover, the FA poster expects the captain to remember several details about herself and the position she was working in the

aircraft (Lines 15 and 16). These details are indeed the responsibility of the captain, as head of the Chain of Command, to remember.

Similar to the safety reports, posts in the discussion forums are linguistic performances. They are ‘highly deliberate and self-aware social displays’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 380) in that flight attendants purposefully compose and submit posts for public reading, response, and display. Posts are not posted accidentally; if a mistake is made, then forum participants can delete or edit the post in question. Moreover, forum posts are ‘marked speech events that are ... differentiated from more mundane interaction’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 380). Forum participants who write and submit posts are aware of their audience and aware that posts can and frequently do elicit replies and interaction from fellow forum participants. We can refer to Example 5.23 to see how these aviation-related social semiotics come together.

Constructing the captain as both deity and fairy tale monster, as in Example 5.23, foregrounds the practices of aviation institutional hierarchy, which affords the captain authority and power over the aircraft and crew. Both a deity and the Big Bad Wolf have power over those under them: the deity has omnipotent power over its subjects, the fairy tale monster has power over those who are weaker and less able to stand up to its strength. However, the FA poster is superficially deferential to the captain by virtue of his position of authority over her and the rest of the crew (Line 12). Thus the hyperbolic constructions of power create indexical stances of rebellion, resistance, and mitigation of the Chain of Command hierarchy in the post. Moreover, inviting fellow flight attendant forum participants to comment on the reported interaction creates a stance of camaraderie (Lines 1, 7, 17, and 20). Line 19 creates an indexical stance of flight attendant as ‘hero’ in drawing on the institutional authority of the first officer to substantiate the hyperbolic constructions of the captain. The flight attendant ‘triumphs’ over the captain who *was wrong*.

The ideology of the Chain of Command is thus heightened by the hyperbolic constructions of power: the FA poster has less power and institutional authority than the captain by virtue of aviation institution hierarchical practices. These differences in power and institutional authority are authorised by the Chain of Command. The linguistic performance of the post, in which the captain is constructed as both a fairy tale monster and a deity, heightens the Chain of Command ideology, by calling attention to the disparity in institutional authority and power between captain and flight attendant while at the same time erasing or ignoring other institutional factors (such as the practical need to have a recognised leader in case of emergencies) which serve to contextualise the power

imbalance. The situated identity which thus emerges from forum posts is multidimensional, reflecting real-world experiences and practices as well as institutional and occupational practices. Flight attendants are not idealised constructions representative of the controlled world of training. Instead, the identity is a product of both the discourse setting and the primary audience, reflecting conflicts between flight attendants, passengers, and pilots.

5.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that the forum posts reflect not only occupational and institutional tasks, interactional norms, and behavioural expectations, but also reflect the lived experience which comes from working flights as a flight attendant, and experiencing the infinite variety of human interaction in the context of commercial aviation. Solidarity and hierarchy are broad ideological influences on forum posts that reflect the flight attendant occupation in commercial aviation. Flight attendants are below pilots in hierarchy and authority. This difference in status can result in clashes between flight attendants and pilots; other times, flight attendants draw on the relative differences in institutional authority and power for their own benefit. Irrespective of these differences in the use of hierarchical differences, flight attendant discourse in the forums reflects the reality and pervasiveness of an inflight hierarchy. This hierarchy can, at times, lead to solidarity amongst flight attendants, whether it be in an inflight crew (excluding pilots) or in a discussion thread in the forums. This solidarity can be seen as a ‘team’ ideology, reflecting the influence of institutional training.

Chapter 6 discusses how identity is further enhanced by discussing certain relations that emerge from the discourse. Additionally, Chapter 6 looks at the construction of community more holistically in the safety reports and discussion forums.

Chapter 6. Discussion: Flight attendants, community, and identity

6.0 Introduction

This chapter extends the analysis in the previous two chapters, and discusses the discursive construction of community and identity pertaining to flight attendants as raised in Chapter 1. Section 6.1 addresses the construction of community in the data, and focuses on how flight attendants draw from their occupational experience and knowledge to create the idea of a community for their audience. Section 6.2 addresses the construction of identity, drawing on intersubjective relations (Bucholtz and Hall 2004) to isolate what it is flight attendants are doing with their language, how specifically identity is constructed, and what the outcomes of such identity construction are. I argue that one outcome, or intersubjective relation, of identity work in the data is an almost total separation of flight attendants from other aviation employee groups and from passengers. Section 6.3 provides a conclusion to the chapter.

6.1 Community creation

Discussion in this section relates to what is shared by flight attendants: experience and knowledge with regards to their occupation. The definition of community from Chapter 1 is reproduced here:

persons employed in the same occupation who share communicative competence of the relevant workplaces(s) through the values, norms, perspectives, and knowledge imparted by training and on-the-job experience.

Therefore, construction of a (flight attendant occupational) community depends, in part, on orienting to what participants have in common, and the processes by which such shared knowledge and experiences come about. It is possible for persons to work a same job and not be considered members of an occupational community. What differentiates merely being employed and being in an occupational community is the explicit and implicit orientation to the similarities which persons share, and the desire to identify with their work (cf. Van Maanen and Barley 1984). Additionally, membership in an occupational community is not merely contingent upon being employed as a flight attendant. One must also possess the communicative competence to say the appropriate thing(s) to the appropriate audience at the appropriate time. These factors are discussed in Section 6.1.1.

In addition to shared knowledge and shared experiences, construction of an occupational community depends on what is *not* shared between the occupation of flight attendant and other jobs with which there is frequent contact in the aviation industry. Because of the unique situation of commercial aviation, much of this difference relates to the Chain of Command hierarchy (as noted in Chapter 3), and in the form of a broader aviation institutional structure, encompassing occupations and roles outside of the inflight dyad of flight attendant and pilot (e.g., Federal Aviation Administration [FAA] inspector; airline management; mechanics; air traffic controllers [ATC]; and passengers).

Membership in a community is contingent on several factors: in addition to the shared knowledge and experiences mentioned above, community boundaries depend on what is deemed exclusionary, including commercial aviation occupations and roles, why such boundaries exist, and what significance the conditions of membership boundary have to the community members. For flight attendants I would argue that *hierarchy* and *solidarity* play a significant role in community membership. These issues are discussed further in Section 6.1.2.

6.1.1 Shared knowledge, shared experiences

Data in the present project are written by flight attendants who share occupational knowledge. This knowledge can be imparted in training (both initial and annual recurrent, as we saw in Chapter 3), whilst in the aircraft (employees sharing information, as we saw in Chapter 4), and even away from the job (for example, posting on an internet discussion forum, as we saw in Chapter 5).

Similarly, working flight attendants gain experience on the job, which in turn imparts occupationally specific knowledge stemming from practice or hands-on experience (in addition to the theoretical knowledge gained in training). It is one thing to discuss or learn something; it is another thing to put that knowledge to practical or instrumental use. My own experience exemplifies this: despite being ‘valedictorian’ (i.e., receiving the highest marks on all of my training exams) of my flight attendant training class, once out of training and in the air, I was terrified almost to the point of inaction because I was suddenly faced with having to put into practice things I had only done in the safe, controlled environment of the training facilities. Such occupational knowledge and experience is evident in the safety report and discussion forum data analysed in Chapters 4 and 5.

Safety reports

The safety reports in Chapter 4 are written in a distinctive register (Hymes 2009: 163; cf. Tannen and Wallat 1993) – they display and reflect the salience of institutional hierarchy for the speech event of the ASRS incident report. In contrast, the forum posts in Chapter 5 display and reflect the salience of solidarity amongst flight attendants as an occupational group separate from, and contrasted with, other groups in commercial aviation (e.g., pilots and passengers). Hierarchy and solidarity are discussed in the following section; my argument here is that awareness of the salience of these factors in their respective contexts is demonstrated in every example in Chapters 4 and 5.

This occupationally specific knowledge of situationally salient influences and factors contributes to the communicative competences of flight attendants in different speech situations and speech events. As a reminder, communicative competence is ‘cultural knowledge that includes social and psychological principles governing the use of language, as well as abstract “grammatical” rules pertaining to the linguistic code’ (Schiffrin 1994: 404; cf. Gumperz 1982; Hymes 1974: 95ff). As it applies to the present project, how communicative competence is gained is, in part, through actual work as a flight attendant, and gaining the knowledge and experiences appropriate to such a position.

For example, consider the various groups of people with whom flight attendants would come into contact on a regular basis. Irrespective of airline employer, commercial flight attendants in the US share the same categories of coworkers and persons they interact with regularly on the job: pilots, gate agents, crew scheduling, passengers, hotel workers, mechanics, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and aircraft cleaners, to name some of the largest groups. Interactions with these different categories of people are for the most part constrained by institutional demands and communicative expectations. For example, passengers most frequently have service-related interaction with flight attendants; gate agents and flight attendants most often interact about boarding times, passenger information, and cabin status; at the start of a layover, flight attendants will interact with hotel front-desk staff to check in to their rooms. This interaction is different to front-desk staff interaction with non-airline crew because flight attendants are not choosing to stay at a particular hotel during a layover. Airlines have contracts with different hotels to provide a pre-determined number of hotel rooms for airline crew on a certain number of days. Flight attendants and front-desk staff are aware of these contracts, and know that airline crew who stay at layover hotels are not staying there for pleasure but instead are told by their airline employers to stay there. Moreover, time is frequently critical when flight attendants are checking into layover hotels, as many layovers are

short, and flight attendants want to maximise their layover time. The quicker flight attendants can get to their rooms, the sooner they can go to sleep, for example, and the more rest they can get before their next day of work. Flight attendants will generally have stayed at hotels on different layovers, and will be familiar with the hotel amenities, and quite often will have stayed in the same room more than once. Thus flight attendants are mainly interested in only getting their room keys from the front-desk staff, and are not interested in hotel amenities which hotel staff may discuss with non-airline guests.

Learning how to talk with each of these categories of people in a situationally appropriate manner contributes to communicative competence. A flight attendant would not speak to a passenger in the same manner as she or he would another flight attendant, a representative from crew scheduling, or airport security (i.e., TSA). There are socioculturally appropriate means of speaking to each of these groups; interactional norms and linguistic codes vary according to participants and setting (Hymes 1986). Through experience on the job, a flight attendant will gain the communicative competence to demonstrate situationally appropriate ways of speaking (cf. Heath 1983). This communicative competence is made linguistically salient in the data.

Let us consider, for example, the terms used in the two different data sources to refer to the occupational role of the head of the inflight Chain of Command. The safety reports use the institutionally sanctioned title of *captain*, or the more generic but still institutionally appropriate category of *pilot* (as in Examples 4.1 and 4.9). Institutional appropriateness here is judged based on audience and norms of interaction (Hymes 1986). In contrast, the discussion forums use a range of terms to describe the captain, including several words which can be interpreted as insults (as in Example 5.23). It is clear that flight attendant participants understand the situational appropriateness for each term (indeed, Example 5.23 explicitly demonstrates this awareness in Line 12). Table 6.1 provides a selection of terms used to refer to pilots in both the safety reports and discussion forums¹.

Table 6.1 Pilot terms

	<i>Safety reports</i>	<i>Discussion forums</i>
1.	3 sets of pilots	a baby
2.	A capt	a class act
3.	Capt	a God Captain
4.	Cockpit	a great guy
5.	My capt	douchebag pilots

¹ Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.5 are not meant to be exhaustive lists of terms, but instead attempt to demonstrate the range of words and phrases used by flight attendants to refer to pilots, passengers, and flight attendants.

6.	Our capt	Most pilots I have flown with
7.	Relief pilot	our pilots
8.	The capt and FO	that fool
9.	The flt crew I was flying with	the 737 and Airbus pilots
10.	The FO	the big bad captain
11.	The plts	the big f*cking hero
12.	The same plt	the older senior guys
13.	This captain	the Scabtain

Similarly, if we compare words used to refer to *passengers* in both sets of data, we can see a similar situational difference. In the safety reports, flight attendants are using terms which display the aviation institutional ideology of passengers as respected and valuable commodities who should be framed in human terms and not depersonalised (e.g., *infant*, *little boy* [Example 4.16], and *young lady* [Example 4.18]). Compare this relatively constrained list of terms with the comparatively wider range of terms used in the discussion forums, which include not only terms used in the safety reports (e.g., *pax*), but also terms which can be interpreted as insults (e.g., *you dip#&t*, Example 5.6). Table 6.2 provides a selection of terms used to refer to passengers in both the safety reports and discussion forums.

Table 6.2 Passenger terms

	<i>Safety reports</i>	<i>Discussion forums</i>
1.	a child	a jackass
2.	a family of 6	a packed 757
3.	customer	a selfish, self-absorbed coach passenger
4.	deportee	Gina from Jersey City
5.	doctor	idiot
6.	helpers	New Yorkers
7.	Mr and Mrs X	pax of the stupid kind
8.	pax	the businessmen that were reading their Wall Street Journals
9.	senior citizens	the dude
10.	the people	the rowdy back of the bus pax
11.	the traveling public	These people who want five hundred drinks
12.	upgrades	two guys
13.	woman	you dip#&t

The safety reports have a different audience, different norms of communication, and different expectations of interaction than the discussion forums, as discussed in Chapter 2. Acceptance and publication of a submitted safety report demonstrates an institutionally sanctioned level of communicative competence for the flight attendant who submitted the report. In theory, any member of the public can download the safety report form and

submit an ‘incident’ to the ASRS. The link to the report form is not hidden, and is freely accessible. However, the report must be believable to the ASRS analysts (discussed in Chapter 2), and must display evidence that it is written by a working flight attendant. It is the display of communicative competence by the flight attendant who writes and submits the report that marks membership which helps to contribute to its acceptance and subsequent inclusion in the database by the ASRS.

Example 4.10 demonstrates this assertion. The report documents several non-routine incidents which occurred to the FA reporter throughout her day which resulted in a shortened layover. The pilots in her crew left the plane before the flight attendants and left the airport for the layover hotel without waiting for the flight attendants. Despite this action violating a practical practice (and possibly an airline regulation, as Line 22 seems to suggest), and despite the departure of the pilots without the flight attendants viewable as an inconsiderate action, the FA reporter never uses language which could be interpreted as disrespectful to describe the pilots or their actions. Instead, the FA reporter maintains a level of respect toward the pilots, despite the violation of the CRM tenet of constructing one inflight ‘team’, and despite the actions of the pilots contributing to the flight attendants’ shortened (and consequently illegal) layover.

Additionally, Line 19 of Example 4.10 displays both aviation-specific and flight attendant-specific knowledge. Note the use of *PHL* (Philadelphia) to indicate both the airport and the city. The reference to the number of passengers requiring wheelchairs is situationally salient, and a flight attendant-specific concern (*we had 5 wheelchair pax, including one non-ambulatory pax*). A *wheelchair pax* is a passenger who requires a wheelchair once off of the aircraft. A wheelchair should ideally be waiting in the jetway for the arriving passenger; in the US, there are specific airport staff contracted and insured to ferry wheelchair passengers from one aircraft to another. Having one wheelchair passenger on a flight is not unusual, but equally is not a common occurrence; I would estimate that there were passengers requiring wheelchairs on approximately 30% of the flights I worked. However, having five on one flight is unusual, and would require a certain amount of coordination between flight attendants asking pilots whilst inflight to contact the arrival airport and order the wheelchairs; gate agents ordering the wheelchairs from airport staff if pilots have not been able to request them before arrival; airport staff receiving the request; and then the staff actually arriving at the gate to ferry passengers off of the aircraft and into the airport terminal. A *non-ambulatory pax* is a passenger who cannot walk, and requires not only a regular wheelchair but also an ‘aisle chair’, which is a specially designed wheelchair narrow enough to fit down an aircraft aisle, with straps to

hold a person upright and in the aisle chair seat (for example, someone who is paralysed or has no control of their muscles). An aisle chair requires even more coordination and airport staff than a regular wheelchair because it requires two persons to operate the aisle chair (regular wheelchairs require only one person). Aisle chairs are not as plentiful in number at airports; there may be a wait for an aisle chair because all are in use with other passengers.

For flight attendants, having 5 *wheelchair pax* on a flight translates to a potentially long wait in the aircraft with the passengers, as flight attendants are federally required to remain on the aircraft until all passengers have deplaned. Often in situations like the one described in Line 19, flight attendants will, after arrival, ask the pilots to physically check on the wheelchairs once pilots have finished their arrival checks and duties, as pilots do not have this federal mandate to remain on the aircraft. Thus, pilots can walk up the jetway and ask the gate agent the reason for the delay for a wheelchair to get to the aircraft. While it is unusual, pilots themselves can also seek out wheelchairs if airport staff are not available (or do not answer the requests for wheelchairs); this act can alleviate an unnecessary and potentially lengthy wait on the aircraft for wheelchairs, as flight attendants are essentially trapped on the plane until wheelchairs arrive to take passengers off. If pilots do seek out wheelchairs or participate in passenger-related duties in any way which is above and beyond their required duties (such as helping passengers off of the aircraft and into wheelchairs), this act contributes to intercrew unity and is seen by flight attendants as a selfless, friendly gesture on behalf of the pilots.

Discussion forums

Being part of an occupational community means more than members sharing knowledge about the occupation in which they are employed. It means the active co-construction of a group as bound together. An occupational community is pulled together not just by the occupational demands and expectations of the employer, but also by the group members and employees themselves. They appear to actively desire to identify as that particular occupation, instead of being resigned to it (cf. Sandiford and Seymour 2007; Van Maanen and Barley 1984).

Occupational knowledge and experience are frequently drawn on in the interaction in discussion threads. This sharing of occupational knowledge and experience comes, in part, through the interaction opportunity which the discussion forums provide. In contrast with the safety reports discussed above, in the discussion forums we get a chance to see how flight attendants work together to co-construct and demonstrate

occupationally relevant knowledge, values, norms, and perspectives – key tenets of what constitute an occupational community. There are at least three factors in the discussion forums related to occupational knowledge and experience which contribute to community construction: the use of *occupationally related jargon*; the use of informal yet *occupationally relevant words and phrases*; and narratives or narrative elements sharing *similar on-the-job experiences*. I discuss each of these below.

We saw the discussion of salient features of the flight attendant job in Examples 5.1-5.9. What contributes to occupational community construction in these examples (which are excerpts from the same discussion thread) are the use of *occupationally related jargon*, which serve as both in-group markers (i.e., demonstrating to the audience that the poster is employed as a flight attendant) and implicit community boundary markers (i.e., no attempt is made to parse these terms; only readers who share knowledge of the meaning of these in-group markers are privileged to understand the full, intended meaning of the post).

For example, Line 2 of Example 5.6 refers to the location of *After about the third row of coach*. While the surface meaning of this location is readily understandable to non-flight attendants – the third row of passenger seats in the economy-class cabin of an aircraft – the community-specific meaning of it emerges with some contextualisation. Beverage services in the main cabin (*coach*) begin at the first row, and continue toward the aft of the aircraft. Each row contains five or six passenger seats depending on aircraft and seat configuration; thus *after about the third row of coach* equates to serving between 15 and 18 passengers if every seat is occupied by a passenger (which is a common scenario). The typical (and federally mandated minimum) flight attendant/passenger ratio is one flight attendant for every 50 passengers; thus after 15 to 18 passengers, a flight attendant will still have at least 30 passengers left to serve. Frequently, the beverage service will be done by two flight attendants working from the front of the cabin toward the aft. Each flight attendant will serve three rows of passengers; they then will move their respective beverage carts forward the appropriate number of rows and the three-row service will begin again. This three-row service and subsequent ‘bumping’ continues until the cabin is served. Thus three rows has a certain significance for flight attendants which emerges after experience working in an aircraft cabin, and repeatedly doing the same type of activity (a beverage service) within the same confines and parameters (three rows in the economy cabin).

Similarly, in Example 5.2, we see the phrase *in the event of an emergency* (Line 6). Chapter 4 identified this ‘what if’ type of thinking as a discursive theme in the safety

reports which is relevant to the construction of a situated ‘flight attendant identity’. This ‘what if’ discursive phrase in Example 5.2 demonstrates the poster’s occupational knowledge about their role in inflight safety. Moreover, I would suggest that use of this phrase communicates to the audience that the poster has the communicative competence to know when and how to use this phrase. Indeed, the full line reads *you will have to have their confidence, later, in the event of an emergency*, and is talking to other flight attendants in the primary audience. Therefore, Example 5.2 is an example of co-construction of community, relying on occupational knowledge, which flight attendants reading this post share, for interpretation of the utterance. Non-flight attendants (i.e., those who do not share the occupational knowledge of the primary audience of this post) may interpret Line 34 as implying that there is a definite emergency for which a professional flight attendant must prepare. However, I would argue that to interpret Line 34 in the manner in which the poster intended requires possession of shared occupational knowledge and experience – the knowledge that a flight attendant must be prepared for an inflight emergency to happen at any time, even though the chances are great that an inflight emergency will in reality never happen.

Additionally, non-institutionally sanctioned words and phrases are used in the discussion forums which contribute to the construction of occupational community. Example 5.23 contains several such phrases: *the pit* (Line 1); *transcon* (Line 2); *The back* (Line 4); and *the guys* (Line 8). These phrases are not used in official communications by organisations with institutional authority such as commercial airlines or the FAA. However, they are used casually in everyday talk on the job by working flight attendants, and therefore serve to mark the flight attendant who posted Example 5.23 as a working flight attendant. *The pit*, derived from *cockpit*, is used as casual shorthand for the *flight deck*, the use of which would index a more institutional and formal stance than *the pit*. Similarly, *transcon*, short for a transcontinental flight which travels from one coast of the US to the other (e.g., East to West Coast), indexes an informal, conversational stance, but one which nonetheless demonstrates knowledge possessed by and shared with working flight attendants. *The back* refers to the group of flight attendants working in economy cabin; *the guys* refers to pilots working in the flight deck.

Inclusion of these informal yet occupationally relevant phrases and words demonstrates the level of communicative awareness of the flight attendant who composed the post, and marks the post as having been written by a working flight attendant and no other aviation employee (or passenger). This message board is for flight attendants; therefore, it is reasonable to expect that posts are written which are concerned with the

flight attendant job. Only readers with on-the-job experience working as commercial flight attendants in the US could correctly interpret the situated meaning of these phrases, and would possess the knowledge of where and when it is appropriate to use them. Despite working in the same industry (and for pilots, in the same aircraft), other commercial aviation employees do not have the same occupational experiences and knowledge.

Inclusion of these phrases also demonstrates that the poster is drawing on the shared knowledge that the poster assumes the audience possesses. Note that there is no explanation for the meaning of these phrases, nor is there any mitigation work or attempt at parsing what these phrases mean. The poster assumes that those who are reading the post (and those for whom the post is intended) will understand the meaning of these phrases. And rightly so – the thread continues with other posters contributing their own similar stories, or with posts offering sympathy or advice for the flight attendant who posted Example 5.23.

A third means for demonstrating shared experiences in the forum discourse is the sharing of similar on-the-job experiences in threads. These experiences sometimes describe situations which may not be sanctioned by institutional authorities (e.g., airline management, the FAA), but which nonetheless occur regularly in the daily work lives of flight attendants. Often these on-the-job experiences focus on flight attendant behaviour, which is understandable given that flight attendants are experts on their own occupation and concomitant behaviour. Moreover, irrespective of airline employer, flight attendants are held to the same or very similar safety, service, and appearance standards which are common across most US commercial airlines (cf. FAA 2004c; Whitelegg 2007). Thus, a flight attendant is expected to wear a clean, odour-free uniform, demonstrate a high level of proficiency in aviation safety and security, and in operate customer service as the examples in Chapter 5 show.

Recall that commercial flight attendants in the US must follow Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs) which at times restrict behaviour and movement in the cabin. Example 5.5, Line 1 states *the FAs were still sitting in their seats doing nothing (except in my case, a crossword puzzle)*. The FAA mandates that for take-off and landing, flight attendants must be seated in their jumpseats, in brace position, observing the conditions of the cabin should an emergency or non-routine incident occur. Engagement in any personal activity (such as reading a magazine or doing a crossword puzzle) violates both an FAR and airline employer work rules². While it may be unrealistic to expect a flight

² FAR 121.391; see FAA (2012c).

attendant to sit passively in a jumpseat for several minutes without doing anything, at the same time, it is dangerous to be distracted from safety-related duties by such personal activities as reading a magazine or doing a crossword puzzle. However, it is common knowledge amongst experienced flight attendants that this FAR is violated despite the consequences if caught. Therefore, inclusion of the phrase *the FAs were still sitting in their seats doing nothing (except in my case, a crossword puzzle)* in Example 5.5, Line 1, works to demonstrate to the primary audience that the flight attendant who composed this post is an actual working flight attendant who understands that the job is often filled with tedious moments of boredom, which some flight attendants fill with disallowed activities. Inclusion of this activity in the post also works to communicate that the flight attendant is not a member of management, and is just like many of her colleagues³.

Other examples of common flight attendant ‘misbehaviour’ on the line are described in Example 5.1, Line 13 (*waving the safety features card back and forth during the demo*); Example 5.7, Line 4 (*FA’s who make instructional PA’s that sound belittling and snarky*); and Example 5.21, Line 1ff. (*the way flight attendants get when pilots as for something and flight attendants get all pissy*). These three examples draw on the shared knowledge that flight attendants are trained to be the visible face of inflight safety, trained to be polite to and patient with passengers, and expected to provide service to pilots. What these three examples demonstrate to non-flight attendants is that flight attendants are not robots who follow every instruction, but instead are fallible human beings who are not always patient, understanding, or obsequious.

Common amongst the retelling of these experiences is the inclusion of the primary audience. The flight attendants who compose these posts are not saying *they* do these things; they are saying *we* do these things, or *we* have witnessed these things, or *we* have experienced these things. Indeed, Example 5.21, Line 1, describes *the way flight attendants get*, implying that *flight attendants get all pissy* (i.e., upset) so often that it has become not just a once in a while event but a *way* of being. Line 1 is not intended as a self-mockery to build solidarity; instead, it draws on shared experience, constructing the primary audience of fellow flight attendants as either having witnessed this behaviour or having committed this behaviour themselves. This audience inclusion happens in every thread in the discussion forums, and demonstrates the active co-construction of a flight attendant occupational community.

³ In the past, other forum participants have accused this particular participant of being a company management spy because he has not sufficiently demonstrated to the primary audience that he is an actual working flight attendant. This history is another reason for the inclusion of what is quite a serious infringement of an FAR in this participant’s past.

In the next section, I discuss how the concepts of *solidarity* and *hierarchy* contribute to the construction of community as it relates to flight attendants.

6.1.2 Solidarity and hierarchy

As the discussion in Section 6.1.1 suggested, hierarchy and solidarity are salient to flight attendants, as evidenced in the data. Institutional hierarchy creates a separation as we saw in the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5, and in Section 6.1.1. Flight attendants in the data are referring to the two employee groups as separate entities, despite being trained to consider them as one united inflight crew. This continual discursive separation stems from, and is a sign of, the physical and institutional separations in commercial aviation.

Pilots feature so heavily in the present discussion because they are above flight attendants in the inflight hierarchy of the Chain of Command; they are the employee group with which flight attendants work the closest; and they are the employee group who ostensibly are responsible for the lives of flight attendants whilst the aircraft is operating. Therefore, the construction of a flight attendant occupational community (and indeed, identity as we shall see in Section 6.2) is contingent upon the institutional, occupational, and sociocultural relationship flight attendants have with pilots.

As we saw in Chapter 3, flight attendants are considered service workers with respect to the airline department which regulates and employs them. The job title of *pilot* is located in Flight Operations (or similar) department; *flight attendants* are in the Inflight Services (or similar) department. Thus, we can infer that irrespective of the advertising rhetoric used, most commercial airlines in the US consider flight attendants to be service workers, which traditionally have less institutional authority and sociocultural cachet than do pilots, who are considered technical workers (e.g., Nevile 2004). Historically, the physical appearances and personal lives of flight attendants were regulated to a degree to which pilots were not subjected. Flight attendants (or stewardesses as they were then known) were terminated if they married, gained too much weight, reached a certain age, or became pregnant.

It is not merely enough to be institutionally and occupationally separated into two groups for an occupational community to be created. It is possible for flight attendants to overcome institutional separations and work to discursively unite with pilots and display awareness of the institutional tenet of one inflight team, and in fact the data suggest that this does happen, albeit rarely. When this unity is demonstrated, it is an example of flight attendants conforming to both occupational training and institutional demands.

Flight attendants and pilots are federally mandated to work together as one unified inflight ‘team’, as FAA (2004a: 6) states: ‘CRM training should focus on the functioning of crewmembers as teams, not as a collection of technically competent individuals’, where ‘teams’ refers to the multiple inflight crews comprised of flight attendants *and* pilots, not one team of flight attendants working in an aircraft cabin with one team of pilots working in the same aircraft’s flight deck. FAA (2003: 2) exhorts that pre-flight safety briefings between flight attendants, pilots, and the captain ‘is to develop a team concept between the flight deck and cabin crew. An ideal developed team must share knowledge relating to flight operations, review individual responsibilities, share personal concerns, and have a clear understanding of expectations’. Finally, Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations mandates that airlines that are Part 121 certificate holders (i.e., commercial airlines) must provide CRM training to pilots and flight attendants (eCFR 2012). The FAA is exceptionally clear about the importance of the concept of one inflight ‘team’, comprised of flight attendants and pilots, to aviation safety. This united ‘team’ concept is reinforced and reiterated at every opportunity, including but not limited to annual training; inflight briefings; and institutional communications such as flight attendant operations manuals.

The data suggest that more frequently, flight attendants in both the safety reports and the discussion forums are discursively constructing two separate groups: flight attendants and non-flight attendants. In the data, these non-flight attendant groups are most frequently passengers and pilots. That pilots are above flight attendants in institutional hierarchy contributes to the separation of the two employee groups. Pilots are no longer not just *them*; they are also in charge of *us*, despite *them* not working in the aircraft cabin. Recall that a central tenet of Crew Resource Management (CRM) – the dominant interaction and communication scheme in commercial aviation between pilots and flight attendants – is the situated construction of an inflight ‘team’ of cabin and flight crew. Yet the data support the assertion that this tenet is difficult to follow.

This discursive separation of flight attendants and pilots fosters a sense of solidarity amongst flight attendants, alluded to in the intersubjective relation of distinction, discussed in Section 6.2: flight attendants are *us*, not *them*; flight attendants are *us* because (in part) flight attendants are not *them*. The shared experience of being in an occupational group which is subject to institutional hierarchy is one contribution to a sense of solidarity amongst flight attendants.

Other contributions to a sense of solidarity amongst flight attendants are the shared experiences which are discussed in the data (e.g., customer interactions, short

layovers, the feeling of lack of respect from passengers); a shared occupational history, which can contribute to stereotyped images, discussed in Chapter 3; and a shared occupational training, regulated by the FAA. These shared elements contribute to the creation of a flight attendant occupational community.

While the discourse setting of the safety reports does not provide a space for interaction amongst flight attendants (as the discussion forums do), nonetheless a flight attendant occupational community emerges from the safety report data, developed through the shared experiences being reported by several different flight attendant reporters. Irrespective of the individual reporters, the safety reports share a broad discursive key (Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2) which signifies to the reader that the reports were written by working flight attendants.

While community is constructed in the safety reports using hierarchy as a resource, in the discussion forums the data suggest that solidarity is more salient than hierarchy in the situated construction of occupational community. Participants in discussion threads are drawing on their shared knowledge and experience of the flight attendant job, contributing to a sense of solidarity: we're all in this together, we all do the same job. The few pilots who participate in flight attendant discussion threads accommodate to the flight attendant participants, for example by playing down their institutional and social status with respect to flight attendants; contributing to flight attendant specific topics of discussion; aligning with flight attendants in discussions about other pilots (similar to the reconstructed dialogue of the first officer in Example 5.23, Line 19)⁴.

Flight attendants can be sensitive when it comes to outsiders attempting to invade their territory. They have to put up with passengers entering into their semi-private space which is the aircraft galley on a daily basis; they equally have to put up with regularly having their personal time during a flight interrupted by occupational demands (e.g., passengers call lights, pilot needs). This heightened awareness to outsiders attempting to invade flight attendants' personal space is one explanation for how aware forum participants are of the communicative competence of their fellow participants. Because participants in the forums are ostensibly anonymous and rarely choose to reveal personal, identifying details about themselves, participants have only the perceived communicative competence of others to rely on in determining if someone actually is who she claims she is (e.g., a fellow flight attendant). One response to my introductory post said she was

⁴ In the constructed apology to the FA poster, the first officer mitigates the ultimate authority of the captain concerned in the post (*the captain was wrong*). The first officer further aligns with flight attendants with the insult *some captains are just a**w*oles!*

‘almost offended when thinking that you, a former red-tail, are now an “outsider” dissecting our behavior’. Despite my years of experience as a flight attendant, I did not display the appropriate situational communicative competence in the forums which would have indicated to some participants that I was indeed who I claimed to be. While it could be argued that perhaps this was a one-off or setting-specific lack of trust, I would argue that for this participant, I had lost the insider position of a member of a flight attendant occupational community in my lack of sensitivity to the desire for off-the-job privacy which many flight attendants have.

It has been asserted in previous chapters that flight attendants have a relatively low position in the commercial aviation hierarchical structure, below airline management, Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) inspectors, and pilots. This relatively low hierarchical position is related to the lower power and status which flight attendants have with respect to other commercial aviation roles. I have discussed flight attendants’ position with respect to pilots in commercial aviation hierarchy; I have not yet mentioned other aviation occupations such as aircraft mechanics and air traffic controllers (ATC). I mention these two occupations specifically because there are retired ATC and mechanics who work as Aviation Safety and Reporting System (ASRS) analysts; there are no retired flight attendants who work as ASRS analysts. This disparity is perhaps indicative of the low status flight attendants have in commercial aviation: mechanics and ATC are considered qualified to read incident reports, while flight attendants are not. A second explanation for the disparity in ASRS analysts could be that there are more incident reports submitted by or involving mechanics and ATC than flight attendants. However, I would argue that not employing at least one flight attendant as an ASRS analyst is a significant deficit.

I would suggest that while mechanics and ATC do not figure into the inflight aviation hierarchy which flight attendants are part of, they nonetheless have more power in the context of commercial aviation than flight attendants have. Both mechanics and ATC have control over more things: mechanics can drive planes, can work to rule and slow down a day of flying, can cancel flights due to mechanical issues (part not in stock, etc). ATC control several aircraft, can delay flights due to congestion, and so on. Flight attendants control relatively little in the commercial aviation industry: they are told what to wear, what to serve, how to serve it, what to do during many segments of flight; their work lives are controlled by several institutional groups and regulations.

6.1.3 Summary

The discussion in Section 6.1 has focused on the shared knowledge and experiences which is prevalent in the data, and which contributes to the construction of a flight attendant occupational community. While the primary audience for each speech event is different, both sets of data suggest that flight attendants are displaying shared occupational knowledge and experiences, albeit using contextually appropriate registers. The flight attendant participants in this thesis share the same training and do the same occupational tasks (discussed in Chapter 3). The data strongly suggest that they share similar or even the same experiences, as demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5.

These shared experiences and knowledge contribute to communicative competence which the flight attendant participants demonstrate in the data. I have argued that the data could only have been written by working flight attendants who possess knowledge about not only occupational tasks, norms, and values, but also knowledge of how, where, and with whom it is appropriate to discuss these occupationally salient factors. The analysis in Chapter 4 has demonstrated that the data is written in a contextually specific register (Hymes 2009; cf. Tannen and Wallat 1993). This register differs to the contextually specific register which is apparent from the analysis in Chapter 5. Both sets of data are written for their specific intended audiences, and demonstrate contextually relevant norms, values, and knowledge. While the register and audience differ according to speech event, the outcome is that the flight attendants who wrote the data share occupationally relevant knowledge, norms, values, and perspectives – the definition of an occupational community⁵.

Thus far, the discussion has focused on the construction of community. I now turn to the situated construction of identity in each speech event.

6.2 Identity construction

The analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that flight attendants draw on occupational and institutional knowledge and linguistic practices which are shared amongst their peers. These shared linguistic practices are not commonly used by non-flight attendants, and include terms and discursive practices specific to the flight attendant profession and to commercial aviation. The safety reports and internet forums are written by flight attendants, but language is being used for different purposes in these speech events. Both discourse contexts contain talk in which flight attendant-specific identities are constructed. Yet I would suggest that the situated identities which are discursively

⁵ An area for future research on flight attendant occupational community construction may include investigating a potential link between emotional attachments to the occupation and voluntary membership in the occupational community.

constructed in each speech event are, though related, not the same, and are instead the result of very different intentions and influences.

In the Bucholtz and Hall (2004) framework of identity construction, in addition to the four components which comprise the identity which is situationally constructed in the talk, there are intersubjective relations ‘created through identity work’ (Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 382). These *tactics of intersubjectivity* (*adequation* and *distinction*; *authentication* and *denaturalization*; *authorization* and *illegitimation*, discussed below) offer a detailed, nuanced approach to factors which motivate and underpin the situated identity being constructed in the discourse. Below, I outline and discuss the presence and result of each tactical relation.

6.2.1 Adequation and distinction: Us, not them

The first pair of tactics, *adequation* and *distinction* (or similarity and difference), heighten similarity in one group, whilst emphasising difference between two (or more) groups. Intragroup differences are frequently downplayed or erased in order to highlight differences between two groups, and similarities in each group. Neither similarity nor difference are objective, permanent states of being; instead, they can be viewed as achievements motivated by social, political, or institutional desires. These two tactics tend to reduce many variables or varieties down to a single dichotomy, namely ‘us versus them’ (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004: 384). At times, this us/them dichotomy becomes a group-defining ‘us, not them’, as we will see in the discussion below.

Safety reports

As discussed in Chapter 4, flight attendants in the safety reports are discursively constructing themselves as a team and do not include other employee groups. While it may not be entirely expected that flight attendants might include gate agents or baggage handlers into their discursively constructed group, we might expect pilots to be an exception, as both groups not only work together in the same aircraft, but also are trained to consider themselves as one united inflight team (discussed in Chapter 3). Instead, what flight attendants appear to be doing in the reports is heightening the unity and ‘sameness’ which they as an employee group have, at the expense of excluding non-flight attendants. This distinction is made in both implicit and explicit ways.

Flight attendant group unity is accomplished in the content of the reports. Out of the corpus of 150 reports, only one documents the actions of another flight attendant, and reports them as causing or contributing to an incident. In this sole report, the flight

attendant reporter claims that the length of breaks during extended flights (which the purser is responsible for setting) is contributing to unsafe working conditions for flight attendants and passengers. It is unlikely that the actions (or inactions) of flight attendants do not cause or contribute to more incidents; however, the data suggest that intra-flight attendant group differences and conflicts are downplayed or even erased in the reports (cf. Irvine and Gal 2009 on erasure contributing to group distinctiveness and homogeneity). Outside of the corpus from which data is drawn for this thesis, I have come across only one other incident report submitted by a flight attendant which reports on the actions of another flight attendant.

This group unity is striking when one considers that the job in which flight attendants are most expert is their own, and therefore any fault which a flight attendant commits should in theory be picked up on and noted if in fact the fault contributes to a reportable incident. Yet the incident reports overwhelmingly construct flight attendants as acting together as a team, each doing the duties which she or he is trained for. Example 4.6 demonstrates this team unity, in the reporting of which tasks were undertaken by which flight attendant: *I climbed over fllt attendant #4 and pax* (Line 2); *Fllt attendant #4 administered oxygen* (Line 7). While there may have been disagreements or disputes about who should do which task, the report constructs cabin crew as working together.

Example 4.7 offers another example of cabin crew working together as a team. Line 19 constructs the flight attendant reporter as working with a co-worker to continue the passenger service (*I informed the cockpit and continued to assist fllt attendant #5 with the svc*); Line 20 describes what other members of the cabin crew were doing during the incident (*Fllt attendants in main cabin also continued their svc, answering concerned pax questions*). While these flight attendants were continuing their service, others were working to resuscitate the ill passenger who later died (*Fllt attendant #3 asked me for the enhanced medical kit and resuscitation bag*, Line 22; *Fllt attendants assisted medical personnel in several procs to help pax, including CPR*, Line 23).

The flight attendant team construct is also seen in Example 4.13, where the flight attendant reporter constructs the cabin crew as a united team, separate to and excluding pilots. Flight attendants work to discover the source of smoke in the cabin without the assistance or involvement of pilots, who are constructed as unknowledgeable about cabin conditions and uninvolved in the incident. The first seven lines of the report describe only flight attendant actions; it is only in Line 8 that pilots are included in the incident (*The cockpit finally told us*).

Flight attendant group unity is accomplished in the safety reports in the use of first-person and third-person plural pronouns: *we/us/our* and *they/them/their*. An analysis of the uses of the words *we*, *us*, and *our* suggests that they are used to refer to at least six different groups of people (as shown in Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Interpretations of ‘we/us/our’ in safety report corpus

	Interpretation of ‘we/us/our’	Frequency (n/%)
1.	Flight attendants only	428 (57.4%)
2.	Flight attendants and pilots	25 (3.4%)
3.	Flight attendants and passengers	6 (0.8%)
4.	Flight attendants, pilots, and passengers	123 (16.5%)
5.	The airline	12 (1.6%)
6.	Flight attendants and others not included above (e.g., commuter; gate agent)	19 (2.6%)
7.	Ambiguous	132 (17.7%)
	Total	745 (100%)

What is striking about these statistics is the differences in occurrence for the different meanings. Over half of the uses of *we/us/our* refer exclusively to flight attendants, while fewer than 5% of the occurrences of *we/us/our* refer to flight attendants and pilots as one inflight team. Indeed, the reports use *we/us/our* to construct a group referring to all aircraft occupants five times as frequently as the ostensible inflight ‘team’ of flight attendants and pilots.

This disparity between what flight attendants are trained to do (construct flight attendants and pilots as one united inflight team, as discussed in Chapter 3), and what is happening as suggested by the data in Chapter 4 is, however, not surprising. Flight attendants share the aircraft cabin with passengers, and spend a great deal more inflight time with passengers than with pilots. In many reports, the reported incidents occur in the cabin or involve passengers, or a combination of both possibilities. At the same time, pilots are located separated from the aircraft cabin, and by federal regulation must remain in the flight deck. This separation (expanded on in Chapter 3) of the two parts of the inflight ‘team’ is discursively reconstructed and reinforced in the safety reports.

The data show that in several reports, pilots are *them* and not included in the flight attendant ‘team’ construction. Of the 129 identifiable uses of *they/them/their* in the reports, thirty-three tokens (25.6%) refer to pilots (as Table 6.4 shows, below). Compare this percentage with the uses of *we/us/our* to include flight attendants and pilots, which is twenty-five occurrences out of 745, or 3.4%. What these statistics suggest is that for the flight attendants writing the reports, pilots are not included in the construction of the

‘inflight team’, contrary to institutional training and expectations (discussed in Chapter 3).

Table 6.4 Interpretations of ‘they/them/their’ in safety report corpus

	Interpretation of ‘they/them/their’	Frequency (n/%)
1.	Pilots	33 (25.6%)
2.	Passengers	24 (18.6%)
3.	Other flight attendants	28 (21.7%)
4.	Gate agents	9 (7%)
5.	Mechanics	9 (7%)
6.	Caterers	2 (1.6%)
7.	Ambiguous	1 (0.7%)
8.	Other	23 (17.8%)
	Total	129 (100%)

This distancing of pilots from flight attendants is discursively represented in both implicit and explicit ways. For example, in Example 4.10 the flight attendant reporter makes this separation of flight attendants and non-flight attendants explicit. In Line 22 the flight attendant reporter attempts to communicate to the pilots that they are one ‘team’, and are meant to not just work together, but also leave the airport together for their layover (*I made the comment that I didn’t know what their hurry was because they couldn’t leave without us and we couldn’t deplane until all of our pax were off of the acft*). Yet the pilots are constructed as breaking this ‘team’ construction, and not only leaving the flight attendants behind at the airport, but also contributing to the subsequent violation of federal regulation regarding the flight attendants’ shorted layover time.

Example 4.20 makes very clear separations between the flight attendants and pilots, and in particular the captain, who is constructed as not merely outside of the flight attendant inflight team, but actively working against flight attendants (and passengers). The flight attendant reporter constructs the captain as violating both federal regulations (in the form of allowed time on duty for the flight attendants) and CRM principles (in the form of non-communication and not working to build a ‘team’ atmosphere; discussed in Chapter 3). Line 21 makes the consequences of this *us/them* separation very explicit: *Flt attendants were backed into a corner with our hands tied behind our backs with no say in what we wanted to do*. Line 22 reinforces the discursive distance between flight attendants and pilot by calling attention to the physical location of the pilots (*the plts refused to come out of the cockpit*).

The exclusion of the captain from the flight attendant ‘team’ in Example 4.11 is more implicit than the previous two examples mentioned. Line 23 constructs the captain as skeptical and disbelieving what the flight attendants tell him – a violation of CRM (*I informed that capt of our previous problem and he seemed incredulous about the whole thing*). Note the word *that* which works to distance the captain even further from the ‘team’ of flight attendants, who are constructed throughout the report as having their safety concerns ignored, first by the mechanics, then by the pilots of their previous flight, and finally by the captain in Line 23. The constructed separation between the flight attendant and pilot crews is reinforced in the final line of the report by constructing pilots as having knowledge which they do not share with flight attendants (*I’m sure he had other reasons only plts know about*).

What these examples suggest is that the physical, occupational, and institutional differences between flight attendants and pilots are very real obstacles in the construction of one inflight ‘team’ comprised of flight attendants and pilots – a central tenet of CRM and a large influence in successful emergency landings (where ‘success’ is determined by the lack of injury to human life or aircraft).

Discussion forums

In the forum data, flight attendant group unity is less emphasised than in the safety reports, perhaps because it does not need to be. Differences between flight attendants are often discussed, and indeed as seen in Chapter 5, forum participants often engage in lively and varied debate, discussion, and negotiation of tasks, traits, habits, and signifiers of flight attendants.

For example, in Examples 5.1 and 5.2 we saw forum participants negotiating what it means to be a flight attendant, each participant contributing to the discussion her insider opinions and ideas. This type of frank and public consideration of differences amongst flight attendants themselves is in contrast to the safety reports, where flight attendants could be said to engage in *erasure* of intragroup differences in order to heighten their unity and solidarity in comparison to other labour groups, most notably pilots (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Irvine and Gal 2009).

The data suggest that a relationship of *us, not them* is being co-created in the discussion forums. By this I mean that the contextual identity constructed in the discussion forums is constructed in part by talk which emphasises the differences between flight attendants and non-flight attendants, most notably pilots and passengers. It is understandable that these two groups would be primarily used as resources for identity

construction, as flight attendants spent the majority of their work time with them (as discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5).

With respect to pilots, the *us, not them* relation is most clearly seen in Example 5.22. The repetition of *If we were on the same team* which begins Lines 1, 3, 5, and 6 emphasises the message of the post that flight attendants and pilots are not on the same ‘team’. Pilots are clearly marked as *they* and excluded from flight attendants (distinguished as *we* to heighten the separation between the two employee groups). Pilots are constructed as having power over flight attendants in several ways. Line 3 tells that pilots have the power to force flight attendants to work beyond federally regulated duty limitations (similar to the incident reported in Example 4.20): *if [we] were on the same team, then they wouldn’t allow the main cabin door to be closed, and the a/c be pushed off the gate because we are approaching a legality issue*. Line 5 addresses a common complaint of flight attendants, that they are *short order cooks at [pilots’] beck and call whenever they are hungry*. While this line works to discursively construct flight attendants as not being under the power of pilots, I would argue that its implicit meaning – that many flight attendants feel they *are* considered to be the servants of pilots – works to define flight attendants against the actions of pilots. Line 6 picks up on the construction of flight attendants as servants (*[pilots] will get fed after all of the passengers and the FA’s have had a chance to pick from the leftovers*), and attempts to use their service tasks as a means for enacting power over pilots. Instead of the powerful, controlling pilots constructed in Line 3, Line 6 works to emphasise the service-related power that flight attendants have (over both passengers and pilots). Example 5.22 describes several contrasts: pilots have power over flight attendants with respect to work hours and legal duty times; flight attendants have power over pilots with respect to serving food and drink. While it is not in the scope of this thesis to explore the stereotyped and hegemonic gendered dynamics of these differing power imbalances, it is certainly an area for future research. What I would like to emphasise is the way that the situated identity of flight attendants is constructed, drawing on the power relations of pilots. In Example 5.22, flight attendants are serve meals to passengers, are not pilots’ personal chefs, and are sometimes forced by pilots to work beyond their legal duty limits. The original poster of this example uses pilots as a direct contrast to the constructed identity of flight attendants: *we are flight attendants in part because we are not pilots*.

Example 5.3 is equally explicit in the division of the two labour groups, using capital letters to call attention to the pronouns *OUR* and *THEY*. The *us, not them* relation is emphasised even further in the contrasting of the two labour groups, notably

constructing flight attendants as being called into action upon a crucial mistake by the pilots. Presumably the flight attendant ‘job’ which starts upon pilot error is a safety-related job; thus flight attendants are reinforcing their importance to aviation safety in talk amongst their peers. This, in turn, reinforces the ‘otherness’ and outsider status of pilots and at the same time depicts roles: *pilots* create problems; *flight attendants* provide solutions.

The *us, not them* relation emerges in talk about passengers, as in Example 5.16. Flight attendants are constructed as sardonic toward passengers and their behaviour. Line 1, *oh geezzzzz....*, can be interpreted as a textual ‘eye roll’, negatively judging passengers’ behaviour. Line 2, *the picture of the jerks in the overhead....*, continues the negative judgment, and contrasts with the emotional labour work in which flight attendants are frequently seen engaging and which we saw in the data in Chapter 4. Line 3, *as if that has NEVER been done*, is sarcastic and is meant to mock passengers who engage in playful behaviour. Flight attendants also engage in this act, something which Example 5.17 points out, but which the flight attendant who posted Example 5.16 does not acknowledge. Line 4, *Next time we tell them their bag doesn’t fit, they’ll be screaming* makes the dichotomy between flight attendants and passengers more distinct. If passengers are *jerks*, flight attendants are not *jerks*. If passengers scream, flight attendants do not scream.

Similar to Example 5.16, Example 5.13 refers to passengers using the insult *jackass* (Line 1, *we had a jackass who wouldn’t turn off his phone recently*). The word *We* refers to the flight attendant crew, and does not include passengers. In using the insult *jackass* (and not, for example, a more objective term such as *first class passenger* or *businessman*) to refer to a passenger, the line works to create a dichotomy between the flight attendants working the flight in Example 5.13 and the passenger who would not switch off his mobile phone when instructed by the flight attendants. The passenger is a *jackass*; flight attendants working the flight are patient (Line 2, *after repeated requests by me and the #1 [to switch his mobile off]*) and resourceful (Line 2, *the #1 got on the PA and announced example what was going on*; Line 3, *this man won’t turn off his cell phone and we may have to go back to the gate*), drawing on the influence of fellow passengers to pressure the mobile phone passenger to comply with flight attendant instructions. The flight attendant who posted Example 5.13 is doing discursive work to distance him/herself from the other passengers, both the *jackass* in Line 1 and the first-class passenger who [*jeer*] at this guy (Line 4). Flight attendants *request*; passengers *jeer*.

Finally, Example 5.12 offers the *us, not them* relation drawing on flight attendant service work and unshared expectations about food service. The flight attendant poster is constructed as generous and altruistic, as in Line 3: *I thought it would be a nice gesture and help us get through the red eye*. *Us* in this line refers to the flight attendant crew; the flight attendant is not concerned with the comfort of passengers. Line 7 constructs passengers as not merely separate from flight attendants, but as rude, pushy, and greedy: *When we got to the back and opened the curtain, there were two guys, with knives in hand, slicing off the cheese and helping themselves*. The *guys* were not flight attendants or pilots (as many flight attendants refer to pilots; see Chapter 5), but passengers who either did not understand or chose to ignore what the closed galley curtain signified: that passengers were not welcome in the ostensibly public space of the aircraft galley. Line 9, *I just looked at them and told them that was my personal food I brought from home*, is meant to construct the flight attendant as wronged, violated, and imposed upon. The passengers not only invaded the ‘flight attendant space’ of the galley but also ate the flight attendant’s own personal food which they themselves provided. Line 16, *manners and etiquette are a lost art*, is a final construction of the *us, not them* dichotomy: flight attendants have manners and etiquette (as in Line 3); passengers are uncivil and take without asking (as in Line 7).

6.2.2 Authentication and denaturalization: Speaking like a flight attendant

This section discusses how the related notions of *authentication* and *denaturalization* emerge from the data, and contribute to the construction of identity in both speech events. Both concepts are concerned with notions of authenticity, realness, and artifice. Authentication focuses on how an identity is constructed as credible or genuine; denaturalization focuses on how an identity which is often essentialised or taken for granted can be shown to be artificial. For example, Barrett’s (1999) work on African American drag queens shows how gender and racial identities are social constructs. The linguistic practices used by the drag queens in their performances create stances which index white women, yet the words are being spoken by black men. These drag performances thus denaturalize or demonstrate how artificial such identities as ‘white women’ can be; additionally, they show the power of discourse in constructing a situated identity.

The analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 suggest that there is more than one way to speak (or write) like a flight attendant, and there is not just one ‘authentic’ flight attendant identity. Flight attendants draw on situationally appropriate knowledge and social

semiotics to signal to their audience that they are professional flight attendants. Below, I expand on this assertion by discussing the authentication and denaturalization of ‘flight attendant identity’ in the safety reports and discussion forums.

Safety reports

One striking element of the safety reports is that they are similar in key and footing, despite being written by different flight attendants. As we saw in Chapter 4, they are concerned with broadly similar topics which relate to various aspects of the flight attendant job (e.g., being alert to potential safety issues; passenger care; interaction with pilots). In the process of constructing these reports, certain discursive features emerge, which contribute to an authenticated identity. What marks this situationally constructed identity as authenticated is the ways in which the flight attendants draw on occupationally and institutionally relevant topics and resources, and how these various resources are tactically used to portray the flight attendant reporters as knowledgeable, capable, and professional flight attendants.

For example, the reports orient and conform to aviation hierarchies, as in Example 4.17, where the captain is clearly constructed as the ultimate authority on the aircraft. Line 1 states that the *capt notified #1 flt attendant of a [hydraulics] leak* and that *all indicators showed a total loss of fluid* (Line 2). Losing the hydraulics is loss of a major aircraft system, and would surely have been a frightening situation. Yet the flight attendant reporter does not indicate this in her report, and instead displays her obedience to authority of the captain. Line 3 states that *[the captain] declared an [emergency]* which results in the suspension of all service tasks, and the immediate beginning of preparations for landing, described in Line 5 (*#1 flt attendant then advised us of our [situation] and to immediately start our ‘chklist’ that we had 20 mins before lndg in [Chicago]*). Example 4.17 thus demonstrates obedience to the hierarchical position of the Lead Flight Attendant (here called the *#1 flt attendant*) as well as to the captain.

Flight attendants also construct themselves as taking action when it is situationally appropriate, and displaying and demonstrating institutional knowledge appropriate to their position. In Example 4.9, the flight attendant reporter hears an unusual sound, reports it to the pilots, and as a result the aircraft returns to the departure airport. Example 4.11 reports that the flight attendants noticed an unusual amount of water on the cabin floor, and *immediately informed the captain* in Line 2. Example 4.2 has the flight attendant reporter taking action to report what she considers to be a potential safety

hazard onboard aircraft – this situation has not yet occurred and yet the flight attendant reporter feels compelled to report the possibility of injury to passengers and crew.

The safety reports also contain several examples of discourse which reflects the reporter's situational awareness and knowledge of occupational expectations. Sometimes these occupationally relevant phrases are passenger-related (yet not service talk participation frameworks; see Chapter 2). Part of the flight attendant job involves customer service, and as such has certain behavioural expectations which often are seen as emotional labour (Hochschild 2003; Taylor and Tyler 2000; Williams 2003; see also Chapter 1). For example, flight attendants are trained to be approachable to passengers by smiling, being polite, being friendly, and engaging in small talk. I would argue that this dual expectation of emotional labour and safety awareness creates a tension which is represented in the reports by a blending of occupationally related discourse with discourse which could be found in contexts outside of commercial aviation.

For example, in Example 4.18, the flight attendant reporter includes information about a passenger which is not strictly relevant to the incident being reported (Line 22, *A pax (a man who wrote for Painted Horses magazine) told me he knew we were in real trouble when he saw the R eng on fire*). Several lines of the report, however, contain discourse which is aviation-related such as Line 1, *I was sitting in 4R jump seat awaiting the 2nd chime*, and Line 17, *we landed safety and taxied to the gate without incident*. The contrast between these two tones of discourse is foregrounded in several of the reports because of their proximity, often in the same line. For example, Line 9, *#2 flt attendant and I went to see what the young lady needed*, contains an aviation-specific term (*#2 flt attendant*, which refers to the specific work position on the aircraft) and the term *the young lady* used to refer to a passenger. Note that the flight attendant reporter could have used a different term (e.g., passenger, woman, person in seat X) but constructs the passenger in terms of age and gender, which works in turn to construct the flight attendant as someone who sees passengers as more than 'bodies in seats' – that is, as doing emotional labour. Line 13 contains a second example of this juxtaposition. We see the emotional labour of the phrase *the young lady's color came back to normal* followed directly by the more institutional tone of the phrase *we returned to our jump seats after doing [our] safety checks*.

Many of the reports in the corpus include 'real life' flight attendant concerns, such as getting injured on the job (Example 4.5), short layovers (Examples 4.10, 4.15), the fear of emergency landings (Example 4.19), and flight attendant/pilot clashes (Example 4.20). These topics are not required for the reports, according to the instructions given by

the ASRS for report completion. Nor are they crucial components of the incidents being reported. I would suggest that inclusion of these ‘real life’ topics have at least two functions: to provide a contrast to the safety talk and discourse regarding institutional and occupational tasks included in the reports; and to contribute to the construction of the reporters as professional, working flight attendants who possess knowledge about such ‘real life’ concerns that is gained whilst on the job.

It is the unique combination of discursive keys or tones (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2) and topics which reflect knowledge and familiarity about occupational, institutional, and personal concerns of flight attendants which mark the reports as discourse from professional, working flight attendants. Only professional, working flight attendants, with experience on the job, have the occupational, institutional, social, and cultural knowledge to write the reports in a situationally and contextually appropriate manner which are accepted by the ASRS as legitimate incident reports (instead of, for example, hoax reports submitted by non-flight attendants). This acceptance by the ASRS and subsequent inclusion of the reports in the publicly available database on the ASRS website are signifiers of authentication of the flight attendant reporters.

Discussion forums

The analysis in Chapter 5 demonstrated that the discussion forum discourse has a different register (Hymes 2009: 163; cf. Tannen and Wallat 1993) to the safety reports, owing in part to the audience for whom the threads are written. Participants in the forums share not only knowledge of institutional and occupational norms (similar to the safety reports), but also the lived experience of how to talk about these norms in a situationally appropriate manner with their peers. The forum discourse works to denaturalize sociohistorical and stereotyped images of flight attendants as selfless caregivers, sexy stewardesses, or perfect hostesses (see Chapters 1 and 3).

For example, in the forum data there is discussion of many occupational norms which are also described in the safety reports, such as passenger service duties and the hierarchy of the Chain of Command. However, in the forums flight attendants are not merely mentioning these occupational norms in passing (as in the safety reports), but are also making personal comments (including value judgments and opinions) about them, many in ways which would violate the tacit interactional and communicative norms of the safety reports.

We see in Example 5.13 the retelling of a passenger who would not turn off his mobile phone after the flight attendant asked multiple times for him to do so. This refusal to obey crew orders is a violation of a Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR), and is grounds for removal from the aircraft. It is rare for flight attendants to insist upon removal from a flight for something as trivial as refusing to turn off a mobile phone; however, this act would be worthy of submitting an ASRS incident report. We can see a similar incident in Example 4.16, which reports a flight attendant's questioning of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) criteria for the use of an infant seat.

The difference between the two texts is striking. Where in Example 4.16 the flight attendant reporter works to construct the situation in neutral and objective terms, Example 5.13 constructs the passenger with a mobile phone as *a jackass*. Where in Example 4.16 the flight attendant cites the institutional authority of the FAA and her (FAA-approved) flight attendant operations manual, the flight attendant in Example 5.13 constructs just how powerless flight attendants actually are at times in the cabin: *It was depressing... that it took [passengers jeering], and not respecting our instructions or the law, to make him turn it off* (Line 5). The institutional authority of the FAA does not have the power to compel a passenger to comply with a federal regulation that peer pressure from other passengers has.

It is equally telling that the post remained public, and was not removed from the discussion thread. There were no subsequent posts disputing the event retold in Example 5.13, which suggests that fellow flight attendant participants interpreted Example 5.13 as a believable event that is from a credible source – a working flight attendant with on-the-job experience, instead of, for example, a pilot, flight attendant manager, or passenger pretending to be a flight attendant.

Flight attendants in forum posts also demonstrate the occupational norm that they are employed for the comfort and safety of passengers. Part of this remit is to provide passengers with service of food and beverage. Where this occupational task is mentioned in the discussion forums, it can sometimes be accompanied by discourse which mitigates the institutionally aligned footing of it with opinionated comments and discussion. This mitigation talk would violate communicative norms of the safety reports; however, in the discussion forums such discourse appears to be acceptable.

For example, in Example 5.12, the flight attendant demonstrates the occupational norm that a passenger service must happen before flight attendants can eat their own food (Line 4, *After the service, when it seemed that everyone was asleep*). Here *the service* refers to a passenger beverage service; use of the shortened *the service* displays

awareness of the shared community knowledge of the audience for this post. After *the service*, the flight attendant then goes on to set up an elaborate buffet of gourmet cheese and chocolates for their fellow crewmembers. This food selection was not for the benefit of passengers, but when passengers discover (and subsequently partake in) the food, the flight attendant implies that they are rude and, owing to the sarcastic key of Lines 11-14, ignorant of the fact that coach-class service does not include such gourmet treats.

Note the elaborate details included in the post. In Line 5, the flight attendant *set up the cheese real cute with the knife and crackers and the fruit in a bowl next to it and the chocolates laid out*. This type of seemingly insignificant detail would violate safety report communicative norms which, as evident from Chapter 4, call for reporters to describe the facts and causes of incidents and not contextualising details or matters which on the surface do not seem relevant to the incidents being reported. However, it is appropriate in the discussion forums, and serves to construct the poster as a professional, working flight attendant, possessing the real-life knowledge and experience required to construct such a post. Moreover, the flight attendant who posted Example 5.12 demonstrates that s/he is aware of both occupational service norms and real-world service actualities. A contrast is constructed, between the coach-class passengers who mistakenly believe they are entitled to *expensive french cheese and toblerone chocolate* (Line 13), and the flight attendant who works to maintain the divide (both physical, in the form of the galley curtain, and nutritional, in the form of different qualities and quantities of food and beverage available) between flight attendants and passengers. This contrast, and indeed the entire post, could not have been written by anyone other than someone who has worked in the job of flight attendant, and has lived experience of what the realities of the job entail.

This type of mitigation talk – that is, discourse which provides a real-world, lived experience to counter the more institutionally focused construction of the flight attendant job seen in the safety reports – works to both denaturalize the sociohistorical and stereotyped images of flight attendants as caretakers or perfect hostesses. As mentioned above, the seemingly insignificant details throughout Example 5.12 (e.g., *my \$25 wheel of cheese*, Line 8; *after we had just served a full meal service*, Line 12) work to construct an identity which offers a contrast – perhaps a balance – to the identity constructed in the safety reports. Where the safety reports show that flight attendants are knowledgeable about and concerned with passenger safety, the discussion forums show that flight attendants are also concerned with having fun at their job, being treated fairly and with respect by passengers, pilots, and airline management, and enjoying the considerable

benefits of the flight attendant job (for example, long layovers in desirable locations, ability to travel at greatly reduced cost, plentiful opportunities for shopping and entertainment, a great deal of time off).

Additionally, the forum data suggest that there is less erasure of differences amongst flight attendants with respect to institutional practices, norms, and expectations than in the safety report data. For example, attitudes towards pilots vary, from arguing that pilots and flight attendants are peers (as in Example 5.18), to mitigating the power and institutional authority which pilots have over flight attendants (as in Examples 5.23 and 5.24). Accompanying this range of attitudes toward pilots are words which refer to the *pilot* but indirectly index non-institutionally sanctioned stances (see Table 6.1 on pages 185-186, above).

Example 5.20 demonstrates awareness of the Chain of Command hierarchy and pilots' institutional authority, but uses terms which would violate the communicative norms of the safety reports. The post refers to pilots as *the younger guys* (Line 2), *the older senior guys* (Line 3), *the younger models* (Line 4), and suggests that (some) older pilots are bigoted and less open-minded than younger pilots, a suggestion which would be inappropriate in a safety report.

Contrast these terms, which index stances of solidarity and friendship, with Example 5.23, which construct pilots as *the pit* (Line 2), *the guys* (Line 8), *the big bad captain* (Line 11), *a God Captain* (Line 16), *wrong* and *assholes* (Line 19, via indirectly quoted reconstructed discourse). Example 5.24 is similar to Example 5.23, referring to the captain as *miffed* (Line 4), *all huffy* (Line 6; both of these words index stances of immaturity, irrationality, or childishness), and *a baby* (Lines 7 and 13). Example 5.24 also refers to the constructed captain as *Buddy* (Line 19), a term which indexes stances of familiarity and solidarity but which can also indirectly index a stance of confrontation and hostility, depending on the context. In the context of Example 5.24, I would argue that the poster intends to create stances of separation, confrontation, and animosity. Note that in safety reports reporting confrontation between flight attendants and pilots (e.g., Example 4.20), terms used to refer to pilots are institutionally sanctioned (e.g., *captain*, *pilot*); there are no terms used to describe pilots in the safety report corpus which can be interpreted as insults. This difference suggests that flight attendants are aware of the audience for each speech event, and compose their discourse accordingly, demonstrating communicative competence across a broad range of speech situations.

In each of the forum posts which contains such non-institutionally sanctioned terms to describe pilots (e.g., *God Captain*, Example 5.23), there are subsequent posts

which affirm the original poster's assertion or description of pilots. This solidarity work both authenticates the identity being co-constructed in the forum (that of a professional flight attendant who is forced to work with childish captains), and denaturalizes the polished images that airlines would seek to portray and promote in advertising literature and campaigns. Only persons who have lived experience working as flight attendants could have the situational knowledge to write such posts as Examples 5.23 and 5.24. Non-flight attendants do not have the lived experience and situational knowledge to compose such posts about negative interactions with pilots. They would not have the communicative competence required to construct posts as believable to the primary audience of fellow flight attendants. That Examples 5.23 and 5.24 were not rejected or dismissed by forum participants (indeed, discussions ensued in each thread) signifies that the flight attendants who posted these two examples were correctly interpreted as authenticated flight attendants who are peers of their primary audience.

Finally, the forum data suggest that solidarity amongst flight attendants is not as strong as suggested in the safety report data. We can see this in Examples 5.6 and 5.7. The first post constructs the flight attendant poster as someone who has no patience for passengers who do not give complete beverage orders (in this case, coffee), and instead must be prompted by the flight attendant for more information. The flight attendant who posted Example 5.6 foregrounds the *us and them* intersubjective relation (discussed in Section 6.1, above) by calling the fictional passenger *Gina* a *dipshit* (Line 8, mitigated for the communicative norms of the forums by the use of symbols for letters in the word), and by constructing *Gina* as *stupid* (Line 6), *arrogant* (Line 7), and working class (implicit, with the reference to *Jersey City* in Lines 6 and 10), and which in this context is a pejorative.

The response to this post (Example 5.7) contradicts Example 5.6 by constructing a flight attendant who is patient and understanding with passengers, an image more in keeping with that constructed in the safety report data analysed in Chapter 4. Instead of agreeing, Example 5.7 rebuts the assertions made in Example 5.6. Flight attendants like the one constructed in Example 5.6 are *lazy* and *tacky* (Line 9), and neglecting one of their primary duties as a flight attendant, which is to provide passengers with service. The final line of Example 5.7 (*No, I don't have an [ounce] of disdain for my own peeps, it's just that I'm a very observational passenger a lot too*) is telling in that the author constructs himself as both a flight attendant and a passenger – reminding the discussion thread audience that flight attendants often fly as passengers, and therefore are sometimes *them* and not *us*. This use of the intersubjective relationship of adequation and distinction

works also to authenticate the author of Example 5.7 as a working flight attendant who has the lived experience to recognise both the sentiment expressed in Example 5.6 and the opinion he himself states.

In the ensuing discussion thread, the flight attendant posters of Examples 5.6 and 5.7 are authenticated as working flight attendants. While the attitudes expressed in each post argue against each other, they nonetheless are interpreted by the discussion thread participants as written by professional flight attendants, expressing genuine opinions which are shared by the audience reading and participating in the discussion thread. These competing constructions of what a working flight attendant thinks about passengers denaturalizes the identity constructed in the safety reports, which is unilateral, working together as a team, and without splintering. Instead, the identity constructed in the discussion forums is multi-faceted and multidimensional, offering a perhaps more realistic construction of professional, working flight attendants.

Summary

The combination of discursive tones or keys (Herring 2007; Hymes 1986; see also Chapter 2) in the safety report and discussion forum data can be considered an authenticated ‘way of speaking’ like a flight attendant. Both sets of data are written by working flight attendants, and both sets of data are authenticated by their respective audiences. The safety reports are authenticated in that they are accepted by the ASRS as genuine incident reports, and are available for public viewing and download at the ASRS website as examples of flight attendant-submitted incident reports. Similarly, the discussion forum posts are authenticated by the audience of fellow flight attendants (and handful of non-flight attendants who are nonetheless commercial aviation employees), and are available for public viewing at the website which bills itself as discussion forums for flight attendants. We can say that the data constitute examples of *flight attendant discourse*: authenticated discourse composed by professional, working flight attendants and existing in speech events which are primarily or substantially associated with the occupation of flight attendant.

6.2.3 Authorization and illegitimation: Institutional authority

The final pair of tactical relations to be discussed and applied to the analysis is *authorization* and *illegitimation*, which draw on notions of institutional authority to legitimate an identity. Authorization makes use of relevant institutional authorities in the legitimation of an identity. With respect to the data, such institutional authorities include

but are not limited to institutions such as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), airline employers, and the institutional hierarchy of the Chain of Command. Additionally, authorization draws on notions of linguistic ideologies, or ways of speaking as legitimated by institutional authorities. Illegitimation mitigates the impact of institutional authority on identity construction. Where the tactic of authorization might draw on an institutional authority to legitimate an identity, illegitimation may reject or dismiss that authority's influence on the legitimation of an identity. Instead, illegitimation tactics might draw on resources outside of institutional authorities (e.g., group consensus, experience) in the construction of identity.

Safety reports

I would argue that flight attendants exist in a world in which sociohistoric and stereotyped images of sexy stewardesses and selfless caretakers compete with the practicalities of flight attendant safety training and security work (discussed in Chapter 3). The safety reports are a speech event in which flight attendants are providing information to an institution. Reports are read by analysts in positions of authority, and are created by those who hold positions and possess the necessary and sufficient communicative competence to do so (i.e., passengers do not have the occupational and institutional knowledge to create such reports).

As demonstrated in Chapter 4, the safety report data draws frequently on different manifestations of institutional authority sanctioned in the commercial aviation industry: the Chain of Command; the captain, pilots, the flight attendant operations manual; the FAA; and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA; the government organisation which facilitates the safety reports that provide the data for Chapter 4). These institutional authorities are used as resources to support or substantiate flight attendant assertions, as in Example 4.14. The flight attendant reporter asserts in Line 3 *Our crew did not want to get off the plane to answer the phone as we were staffed at minimum [crew]*. Line 4 draws on the institutional authority of the FAA to substantiate this assertion: *We were also told by an FAA inspector on this flt that in no way should we get off the plane to answer the phones when staffing is at minimum*. In fact, Example 4.14 draws on two different authorities, the FAA and the flight attendant operations manual. The reporting of the discrepancy between the FAA inspector and what the flight attendant manual (which is approved and regulated by the FAA) contributes to the construction of an identity which is knowledgeable about Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs). The

audience for the reports shares this knowledge about FARs, and the importance of adhering to them.

It has been established in Chapter 3 that flight attendants undergo a great deal of safety training, and have the safety of passengers and crew as one of their two primary duties. It should be sufficient that the flight attendant reporters themselves makes the assertion, but instead some reporters draw on institutional authorities to support their assertion in the following line of the reports, which I would argue works to legitimate the situated identity in the safety reports. Flight attendant reporters make choices in the discourse they use in their reports; they do not have to include institutional authorities as support for assertions.

Reference to authorities such as the FAA in the reports indicates that flight attendant reporters understand the tacit communicative norms in the speech event of the safety reports. It is an institutional authority to which they are submitting the reports, therefore inclusion of other institutional authorities to support reporter assertions does not detract from the impact of the report, and may contribute to the likelihood that ASRS analysts will take heed of the incident being reported.

Identity constructed in the safety reports is legitimated also by adhering to tacit language ideologies that exist in commercial aviation. Recall that I argued in section 6.2.2 that the reports were examples of ‘speaking like a flight attendant’. This authentication comes in part from using certain words and phrases which stem from institutions that have authority over flight attendants, such as FARs enacted by the FAA, and flight attendant operation manuals, which are composed by individual airlines but governed and regulated by the FAA. Moreover, this authentication leads to authorization of the identity constructed in the safety reports in that the reports not only are examples of flight attendant discourse, but are also examples of flight attendants drawing on institutional authorities and concomitant discourse practices. These discourse practices are strongly associated with institutional authorities, and work to legitimate the situated identity constructed in the safety reports.

For example, Lines 1 and 2 of Example 4.1 include such words and phrases as *upon landing*, *non-flaps emergency arrival*, *taxied*, and *deplaning*. These aviation-related syntagmatic features index stances of professionalism and occupational knowledge. The flight attendant reporter has choices in their discourse; they could instead write *when we landed* instead of *upon landing*, and *getting off the plane* instead of *deplaning*. But they do not, and instead uses words and phrases associated with commercial aviation. Additionally Line 1 includes the phrase *non flaps emergency landing* which indexes a

knowledge of aviation and flying ability. The word *taxied*, which indexes a stance of familiarity with aviation practices, is contrasted with the phrase *parking spot*, which is less associated with the aviation industry and more associated with a non-aviation specific lexicon. Finally, Line 8 constructs the captain as overcoming the reported problem (*Once everyone deplaned, capt came back and finally got them opened.*). Note the use of the word *deplaned* which is associated with commercial aviation.

We can see similar discursive choices in Example 4.5, Line 1 (*At the command of the purser's Flt attendants disarm doors for [arrival] call, I went to door 1R to disarm*). Note that the flight attendant could have said something else (e.g., 'when the purser said to disarm the door'; 'when I was told to disarm my door') but instead uses discourse which recalls language used by airlines to instruct flight attendants in normal door operations (cf. NWA 1999). The safety reports draw on myriad institutional authoritative 'ways of speaking' (cf. Heath 1983): discourse which is strongly and primarily associated with a commercial aviation register (Hymes 2009; cf. Agha 2001; Tannen and Wallat 1993) and which is used by institutional authorities (e.g., in flight attendant operation manuals and FAA communications). This use of commercial aviation register thus contributes to the legitimation of the identity constructed in the safety reports.

Discussion forums

Data from the discussion forums suggests that flight attendant participants draw on institutional authorities in commercial aviation in the construction of identity. For example, several of the posts orient to the Chain of Command hierarchy, and do not challenge the privileged position which pilots, and especially the captain, has. Example 5.9 uses the institutional authority of the captain to substantiate or legitimate the caricature being constructed of the space cadet flight attendant (Line 2, *Had a captain years ago say about my co-worker*). The poster of Example 5.9 could have chosen a different commercial aviation occupational role; instead, they chose to use the head of the Chain of Command which legitimates the assertion being made in Line 4 (*Damn, that girl don't know the difference between a DC9 and an IUD.*). Example 5.11 constructs the captain as the unchallenged head of the Chain of Command, with the power to have security meet the aircraft to *explain the rules of good conduct on an aircraft* (Line 12) to a passenger who threw a used diaper at a flight attendant. In Example 5.19, the captain is used as a resource for improving the working conditions of flight attendants (Line 4, *Yet, I've found that sometimes by getting our Captain involved, it can be enough to rattle*

management's/scheduling's cages and get some attention when our own f/a efforts are conveniently being put off.).

However, the data suggest that the discursive choices by flight attendants in the discussion forums work to illegitimate the very institutional authorities which are used as resources for identity legitimation in the safety reports. For example, in Example 5.24, the captain is constructed as a *baby* in Line 7 because he did not want to wait the ten minutes which the flight attendant suggested it would take her to complete her service. Certainly the captain of an airline is not a baby; he or she is a grown adult with many years of experience and knowledge. However, the flight attendant who posted Example 5.24 is using the rhetorical insult *baby* to not only mitigate the institutional authority which this captain holds, but also to call attention to relative difference in attitudes of the flight attendant and captain being constructed in the post.

The flight attendant is constructed as professional and objective, concerned for both safety and service (the two major focuses of the job of commercial flight attendant), as in Line 11, *it was a little bumpy at first, probably delayed our first bar cart by 15 minutes*). In contrast, the captain is constructed as impatient, ignorant of activities in the cabin (activities which are ultimately under his control as head of the chain of command on the aircraft), and unable to control even the most basic of bodily functions. This distinction between flight attendant and captain is clear in Line 5 (*I said yeah, can you wait ten minutes, we'll be done.*) and Line 6 (*He got all huffy and said "well, I really can't wait, you should call us after the first service, I need to go NOW."*). Thus, the authority of head of the Chain of Command is mitigated by the portrayal of the Captain as selfish, impatient, and immature. The identity of the flight attendant poster is constructed in part by illegitimizing this institutional authority.

Illegitimation of the Chain of Command can also be seen in Example 5.25. Line 2 asserts that pilots *aren't supervisors when the plane is parked*, implying that they are supervisors when the plane is not parked, i.e., when the aircraft is in motion. However, the purpose of Example 5.25 is not to communicate to fellow thread participants that the author of the post is aware of the hierarchical status of pilots with respect to flight attendants. Instead, Example 5.25 works to mitigate the institutional authority that pilots have over flight attendants, as we can see in Lines 1 and 3. Line 1, *But I wouldn't do [it] on "orders" by the flight deck* (where here, 'flight deck' is a synonym for pilots), asserts that the flight attendant will not obey a command from a pilot in a given scenario. Moreover, she puts *orders* in quotation marks, to highlight the ridiculousness which she holds the concept of pilots giving her orders to be. Only actual supervisors can give

underlings *orders*; the flight attendant who posted Example 5.25 negates the hierarchical status of pilots above flight attendants by equating a command from a pilot to something fictional, improbable, or incredulous. Moreover, Line 3 in the same example flips the hierarchical relationship of flight attendant and pilot, and constructs the flight attendant as having the institutional authority to command a pilot. The pragmatic impact of this line relies on the shared knowledge of fellow forum participants that flight attendants cannot really give orders to pilots (cf. Bourdieu 1992: 75, arguing that a soldier cannot give his captain orders and expect his captain to carry them out).

Example 5.4 appears to erase the role that pilots have in aviation and air safety. In the assertion of Line 2 that *if you walked away from an airplane crash, thank a flight attendant!*, the flight attendant foregrounds the role of flight attendants in aviation safety at the same time as deleting the equally important role of pilots in airplane crashes. Certainly each inflight crew member has their own tasks to complete during non-routine operations, but Line 2 denies that pilots have any part to play in the safe evacuation of an aircraft after an emergency landing.

It is not just pilots whose status is mitigated. Passengers have power over flight attendants in commercial aviation; their institutional authority in commercial aviation should not be underestimated (see Chapter 1). Indeed, it is because of the mere presence of passengers that the occupation of flight attendant exists⁶. Example 5.6 offers an example of such mitigation of the status of passenger. In Line 8, the constructed passenger in the post is called a ‘dipshit’ (*dipshit*) because she does not respond to the flight attendant’s question in a manner which the poster deems appropriate (*she looks at you and says in question form, cream and suga?*, Line 6). Similarly, the passenger constructed in Example 5.13 is a *jackass* (Line 1).

As Table 6.2 on page 186 demonstrates, there are differences between safety reports and discussion forum threads with respect to words and phrases used to refer to passengers. We can see that terms for passengers in the safety reports display awareness of their status as having power over flight attendants. Passengers are referred to by various terms; however, all terms are institutionally sanctioned and reflect the privileged status which passengers have in commercial aviation. Even in Example 4.16, where the infant’s mother is doing something which the flight attendant perceives as dangerous, the report does not mitigate the passengers’ status. Indeed, the term *little boy* (Line 13) is used for pragmatic impact, to discursively demonstrate how fragile or helpless the child is, and to support the flight attendant’s assertion that the FAR is dangerous.

⁶ See e.g., FAR 121.391; FAR 121.393; available at FAA (2012a).

The term *little boy* appeals to readers' emotions. Similarly, the use of *jackass* and *dipshit* in the forum threads appeals to the participants' emotions, by using non-institutionally sanctioned words in the form of insults to perhaps more accurately demonstrate to the audience the true feelings of the flight attendant writing the post. However, when using non-institutionally sanctioned terms (*little boy* for *infant*, for example), the safety report discourse does not contain taboo language or insults, and does not dismiss the institutional authority of non-flight attendants (e.g., passengers, pilots).

The discussion forums have a broadly different register to the safety reports. Tables 6.1 on pages 185-186 and 6.2 on page 186 demonstrate this difference with respect to terms used to refer to pilots and passengers; Table 6.5 offers a selection of terms used in the safety reports and discussion forums to refer to flight attendants.

Table 6.5 Flight attendant terms

	<i>Safety reports</i>	<i>Discussion forums</i>
1.	#1 flt attendant	a few bitchy flight attendants
2.	a few flt attendants	a shit load of FA's senior to you
3.	An MD80 cabin crew of only 3 flt attendants	award winning FA's
4.	Everyone	brothers and sisters
5.	Flt attendant	Cookie Pusher
6.	I and my co-workers	horrible flight attendants at all seniorities
7.	Minimum crew	my own peeps
8.	My flying partner	our colleagues
9.	Our entire crew	the newbies
10.	Purser	the people that actually enjoy the job
11.	The 4 of us working in coach	the responder
12.	The JFK based flt attendant	vapid airheads
13.	Working crews	waitress

In the safety reports, terms used to refer to flight attendants are, broadly speaking, objective, institutionally sanctioned, and can be considered aviation jargon (e.g., terms such as *FA*, *flight attendant*, and *crewmember*). The discussion forums make use of many of these same terms, but also include slang terms which would violate tacit communicative norms of the safety reports (e.g., *my own peeps*, Example 5.7; *your lazy ass*, Example 5.21). Use of such terms in the discussion forums as listed in Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.5 illegitimizes the institutions which grant participants their flight attendant status (e.g., the FAA, airline employers). Instead, what works to legitimate identities constructed in the discussion forums are non-institutional authoritative concepts such as flight attendant seniority, experience, and group consensus.

We can see experience being used in identity construction in Example 5.15, Line 1 (*This story made the rounds many years ago*). The flight attendant includes the particular phrase *many years ago* to construct an authoritative identity based on years of working in the role of flight attendant. Without Line 1, the identity constructed in Example 5.15 does not have the same occupational and situational authority. Note that this authority does not come from an aviation institution but instead from experience, with which fellow flight attendants can identify. Similarly Example 5.11, Line 1 (*well, [there's a lot] to choose from*) implies that the flight attendant poster has enough experience in the position of flight attendant to have a plethora of anecdotes which would have satisfied the focus of the particular thread. Line 2 starts with *guess I'll start with*, implying that the flight attendant intends to contribute more than one posts to the thread.

Identity in the discussion forums can be seen as being legitimated by institutional authority (as in Examples 5.9 and 5.11); additionally, flight attendants use other authorities such as experience and seniority in the construction of identity, which can work to illegitimate the institutional authorities (e.g., FAA) from which flight attendants receive their own occupational authority.

6.2.4 Summary

The discussion in Section 6.2 has focused on how the tactical intersubjective relations of *adequation* and *distinction*, *authentication* and *denaturalization*, and *authorization* and *illegitimation* emerge from identities constructed in the safety reports and discussion forums. I have argued that despite training which attempts to construct flight attendants and pilots as one united inflight 'team', the data reveal the distancing and at times separation of pilots from flight attendants. This distancing results in flight attendants constructing and displaying notions of *us* and *them*, which can impact on inflight safety. Additionally, I have argued that there are authenticated ways of 'speaking like a flight attendant', which are contingent upon myriad contextual factors such as primary audience, norms of communication and interaction, communicative goals, and setting for the speech event (e.g., physical or virtual). These 'ways of speaking' stem from the authenticated identities constructed in the safety reports and discussion forums, and can be considered examples of flight attendant discourse. Finally, I have argued that institutional authorities and discursive practices are used as resources to legitimate identities in the safety reports. The discussion forums draw on institutional authorities and discursive practices as well as non-institutionally sanctioned but nonetheless

occupationally and community-relevant resources such as seniority and experience to legitimate the situated identities.

6.3 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have argued that community and identity are constructed in the safety reports and discussion forums using similar resources but in different ways. Flight attendants draw on institutional, occupational, and practical practices, indexical stances, ideologies, and performances to construct situationally relevant identities in two different speech events. These speech events have different communicative and interactional norms, yet the data suggest that there are similarities between the discursively constructed identities. These similarities include orienting to institutional authority; demonstrating occupational roles, tasks, and duties; and displaying awareness of the institutional authority and hierarchy of the Chain of Command.

At the same time, the data suggest that there are differences in how flight attendants use discourse in the two speech events, which demonstrates participants' awareness of communicative norms and expectations, and indeed is evidence of participants' communicative competences in the speech events. In the safety reports, flight attendants draw heavily on institutional practices, and display knowledge and awareness of institutionally sanctioned norms, values, and expectations. For example, flight attendants rarely question decisions made by pilots, and draw on the actions of pilots to validate their own actions. Flight attendants are constructing their identities in part through drawing on pilots' actions and institutional authority and power dynamics. Moreover, flight attendants draw on institutional authorities to substantiate their own assertions which works to legitimate the constructed identities.

In the discussion forums, flight attendants mitigate power and institutional authority differences between themselves and pilots, often dismissing the knowledge, skills, and training which pilots have and constructing them as individuals without skill and unworthy of the institutional and social status which they have or autocratic dictators who attempt to control and dominate flight attendants whilst working. None of these scenarios are factually correct; in fact, pilots and flight attendants regularly receive training in working together and constructing a 'team' atmosphere during work. Yet this regular training is not being emphasised in forum discourse as regularly and overtly as it is in the safety reports, except as a resource when flight attendants and pilots have disagreements or there is miscommunication between the two labour groups.

Taking the data and constructed identities from both speech events into account results in a more complete, less one-dimensional discursive construction of ‘flight attendant’. Instead of solely relying on the safety reports, which constructs flight attendants as working together as a team, providing service to passengers, and following the rules set out by institutional authorities, we now can see a different side to the flight attendant profession. To the audience of ASRS analysts, flight attendants construct identities which appear to comply with Federal Aviation Regulations, airline management rules, and captains’ instructions; to the audience comprised mainly of peers, flight attendants discursively orient to these same things, often in different, less institutionally sanctioned ways. Additionally, flight attendants in the discussion forums are describing experiences and knowledge which only their peers share, and which they may not want shared with the audience of the safety reports.

Finally, the identities constructed in the safety reports and discussion forums tacitly counter the myriad negative stereotypes of flight attendants, rooted in historical job expectations and images, and perpetuated in popular culture and in the commercial aviation industry (Clark 2007; Whitelegg 2007; see also Chapter 3). Many of these stereotypes portray flight attendants as sexy stewardesses and dim-witted non-professionals who are concerned less with aviation safety and security than with non-occupationally related interests. However, I would argue that the safety reports and discussion threads offer a different perspective to these stereotypes, and contribute to a multi-dimensional, multi-faceted ‘flight attendant identity’.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

In this brief conclusion, I provide a summary of main arguments in the thesis (Section 7.1), discuss limitations of the thesis (Section 7.2), and conclude with areas for future research which emerged from the present project (Section 7.3).

7.1 Summary of thesis

With this thesis, I have attempted to contribute to existing research on discursive construction of identity. To my knowledge this thesis is the first linguistic study of flight attendant language. Flight attendant discourse in both the safety reports (Chapter 4) and the forum discourse (Chapter 5) shows influence from a range of institutional, occupational, and practical practices. Indexical stances created from these practices demonstrate an awareness of the primary audiences (e.g., aviation authorities or fellow flight attendants) and concomitant norms of interaction and communication. Stances of professionalism (e.g., Example 4.5) and institutional authority (e.g., Example 4.20) in the safety reports are compatible with institutional expectations of flight attendant behaviour and interaction with passengers and pilots, while stances of joking and camaraderie (e.g., Example 5.8), flight attendant as ‘hero’ (e.g., Example 5.11), and antagonism (e.g., Example 5.21) in the forum discourse are compatible with the primary audience of the forums, comprised of fellow flight attendants.

The forums are a space to ‘blow off steam’ about the job, and to discuss with fellow flight attendants opinions and points of view which may not be welcome or sanctioned by institutional authorities, such as constructing flight attendants as the ultimate heroes of commercial aviation accidents, as in Example 5.4. The safety reports are a space to display safety-related knowledge, as in Example 4.1 (which reports an actual incident) and Example 4.3 (reporting a hypothetical incident which the reporter asserts, based on their safety knowledge and experience on the job, is a potential threat to safety).

In the safety reports, safety and the Chain of Command emerge as ideologies that condition the discourse. These ideologies are heightened in the linguistic performances of the reports. While the forum discourse displays influence by the Chain of Command ideology, a ‘team’ ideology also emerges, influenced by institutional interactional expectations which require flight attendants and pilots to work together as one united inflight ‘team’. In the forums, instead of flight attendants discursively constructing a ‘team’ with pilots, their discourse reflects the realities of the two occupations which result in an almost total separation of the two groups. These institutional, professional,

occupational, and social divisions (discussed in Chapter 3) contribute to the construction in the forum discourse of an intersubjective relation of distinction (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2004; Chapter 6), or ‘us and them’. Flight attendants are a team (i.e., us) separate to and frequently in opposition to non-flight attendants.

Identity constructed in the safety reports appears to conform to institutional hierarchical constructions of flight attendant as having less power and institutional authority than pilots. Flight attendants draw on institutional authority in their discourse, contributing to an authenticated, authorized identity. The safety reports construct flight attendants as speaking in institutionally sanctioned and approved ways, using appropriate titles and showing authorized deference to institutional authorities. Even when flight attendants are forced by pilots to work beyond their legal duty day, they still display deference and show respect to the captain (as in Example 4.20). The forum discourse, meanwhile, reveals a denaturalization of this identity, drawing on more practical experiences and mitigating the institutional influence which appears so salient in the safety reports. In the forums, flight attendants are still ‘speaking like flight attendants’, but the identity is less idealised and more realistic than what the safety reports might suggest. Flight attendants have patience when dirty diapers are thrown at them (Example 5.11), but they lose their patience with incomplete beverage requests (Example 5.6).

Equally, in this thesis I have attempted to contribute to the growing body of literature on occupational community construction to include a discursive approach. I have argued that including language as a part of the criteria for community construction provides a more rounded and fully formed theorisation of occupational community. In both the safety reports and discussion forums, flight attendant discourse displays knowledge of the occupation which is shared across multiple participants and situations. Moreover, flight attendants voluntarily participate in both the safety reports and discussion forums, demonstrating a willingness to discuss occupational interests outside of the confines of the aircraft. In both sets of data, flight attendants use language distinct to the aviation industry, discursively constructing a border between community insiders and non-members. Flight attendants and pilots share some discursive practices and jargon, but a flight attendant occupational community has its own distinct discursive practices and communicative competences, which non-members (including pilots) may not understand the full range of meanings in (for example, stating *we had 5 wheelchair pax, including one non-ambulatory pax*, as in Line 19, Example 4.10). While they work closely and frequently rely on each other, flight attendants are a distinct and separate

occupation to pilots, resulting in a unique community with its own practices, culture, history, jargon, and identities.

7.2 Limits of thesis

Access to data restricted the research. Access to airlines would have provided me with another area of information, being able to following the flight attendants and witness them interacting on the job with each other, with passengers, with pilots, and with other actors in the aviation industry. However, airlines are extremely protective of their privacy and confidential information; consequently, no airline was willing to allow me to conduct critical academic research using either their employees or their data. The safety reports and discussion forums are publicly accessible, and provided a wealth of data which participant observation and interviews with flight attendants could not have provided, owing to the candor of anonymity the safety reports and discussion forums provide.

I have direct experience being a flight attendant, but do not have the same lived experience and knowledge of being a pilot or flight attendant manager, for example. Therefore, I have experienced commercial aviation only from the viewpoint of two groups in commercial aviation: flight attendants and passengers. My time as a flight attendant was both a help and a hindrance. My insider knowledge, experience, and communicative competence greatly aided the analysis, yet distancing myself from the data initially proved to be challenging. It can be difficult to obtain objectivity when researching a community one has membership in or intimate familiarity with (Fox 2004; Jacobs-Huey 2002; cf. Bucholtz 2001).

However, the restrictions in data and participants provided a greater focus for analysis. Having no access to the flight attendants who provided the data forced me to look only at the data, and not draw on participants' reactions or own thoughts about what they were doing with their discourse. Being able to interview the flight attendants who provided the data would have contributed contextualising information which may not be available in the discourse. Additionally, interviewing the flight attendants who provided the data would have provided detail about sociolinguistic factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, and education. For example, incorporating into the analysis the gender of the flight attendants who provided the data could have contributed to the body of literature on gender and language, and gender in the workplace.

7.3 Areas for future research

Building on the previous section, an obvious area for future research on flight attendants is incorporating gender into the analysis. The literature on gender and language has grown since Lakoff (1975), yet there remains no linguistic research on flight attendants, language, and gender. Given that the profession of flight attendant has such a strong gendered history and gendered stereotyped images (as noted in Chapter 3), it seems surprising that such research has not yet been conducted.

Another area for future research concerns speech events (Hymes 1986) which involve flight attendant interactions with pilots and which can heavily influence flight safety. One primary speech event which fits this criteria is the *pre-flight safety briefing* between pilots and flight attendants which is conducted by the captain. As Chapter 3 demonstrated, this speech event is a fundamental opportunity for the construction of crew unity, and sets the ‘tone’ of the flight. As my experience shows, a bad briefing experience can contribute to feelings of resentment and hostility which can be difficult to overcome, irrespective of the incident or condition of the cabin. Fortunately for the passengers on that flight, there was no inflight emergency, and my vow of ‘never speaking to the captain unless I saw smoke in the cabin’ was merely a way for me to relieve my sour feelings. However, this speech event is a significant contributing factor to successful outcomes of inflight emergencies, as Example 3.3 demonstrates.

Future research on flight attendants and language will no doubt reveal additional insights into the contribution of institutional and ideological influences on discourse and identity construction. This thesis is what I hope will be the first of many research projects into flight attendants and their language.

Appendix A

ASRS reporting form

C

DO NOT REPORT AIRCRAFT ACCIDENTS AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES ON THIS FORM. ACCIDENTS AND CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES ARE NOT INCLUDED IN THE ASRS PROGRAM AND SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED TO NASA. ALL IDENTITIES CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT WILL BE REMOVED TO ASSURE COMPLETE REPORTER ANONYMITY.													
IDENTIFICATION STRIP: Please fill in all blanks to ensure return of strip. NO RECORD WILL BE KEPT OF YOUR IDENTITY. This section will be returned to you.			<small>(SPACE BELOW RESERVED FOR ASRS DATE/TIME STAMP)</small>										
TELEPHONE NUMBERS where we may reach you for further details of this occurrence:													
HOME	Area _____ No. _____	Hours _____											
WORK	Area _____ No. _____	Hours _____											
NAME _____ ADDRESS/PO BOX _____ _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____			TYPE OF EVENT/SITUATION _____ _____ DATE OF OCCURRENCE _____ <small>(MM/DD/YYYY)</small> LOCAL TIME (24 hr. clock) _____ <small>(HH:MM)</small>										
PLEASE FILL IN APPROPRIATE SPACES AND CHECK ALL ITEMS WHICH APPLY TO THIS EVENT OR SITUATION.													
REPORTER		EXPERIENCE											
<input type="checkbox"/> Flight Attendant (FA) <input type="checkbox"/> FA in charge <input type="checkbox"/> Off-Duty FA <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____		Total years as Flight Attendant _____ Total years as FA with your current airline _____ Number of aircraft types currently qualified to work on _____ Percent of duty time in past year on aircraft type involved _____ %											
FLIGHT INFORMATION													
Type of Aircraft	Make/Model (e.g. B737) NOT "N#", Flt #, etc. : _____ number of seats _____ number of pax on board _____ number in cabin crew _____ number of exits: floor level _____ window _____ tailcone _____												
Flight Segment	flight origin _____ destination _____ departure time _____ (HH:MM) time since takeoff _____ hrs/mins nearest city & state (if known) _____												
Cabin Activity (check all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> boarding <input type="checkbox"/> beverage service <input type="checkbox"/> cart service <input type="checkbox"/> deplaning <input type="checkbox"/> meal service <input type="checkbox"/> tray service <input type="checkbox"/> other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> safety related duties, specify _____												
OPERATOR	FLIGHT PHASE	WEATHER	LIGHTING										
<input type="checkbox"/> air carrier <input type="checkbox"/> air taxi <input type="checkbox"/> corporate <input type="checkbox"/> fractional <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> parked <input type="checkbox"/> taxi <input type="checkbox"/> takeoff <input type="checkbox"/> climb <input type="checkbox"/> cruise <input type="checkbox"/> descent <input type="checkbox"/> approach <input type="checkbox"/> landing <input type="checkbox"/> gate arrival <input type="checkbox"/> other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> clear <input type="checkbox"/> rain <input type="checkbox"/> turbulence <input type="checkbox"/> thunderstorms <input type="checkbox"/> unknown <input type="checkbox"/> cloudy <input type="checkbox"/> fog <input type="checkbox"/> snow <input type="checkbox"/> ice	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">CABIN</td> <td style="text-align: center;">OUTSIDE</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> high</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> daylight</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> medium</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> night</td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> low</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><input type="checkbox"/> off</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	CABIN	OUTSIDE	<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> daylight	<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> night	<input type="checkbox"/> low		<input type="checkbox"/> off	
CABIN	OUTSIDE												
<input type="checkbox"/> high	<input type="checkbox"/> daylight												
<input type="checkbox"/> medium	<input type="checkbox"/> night												
<input type="checkbox"/> low													
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EVENT CHARACTERISTICS													
Reporter's location in aircraft at time of event _____ Reporter's activity at time of event _____													
Was a passenger directly involved in the event? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Reset		Was fire/smoke involved in the event? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Reset											
Did this event result in an injury to passenger? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Did this event result in an injury to crew? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Reset		Was there an evacuation during or as a result of this event? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No Reset											

NATIONAL AERONAUTICS AND SPACE ADMINISTRATION

NASA has established an Aviation Safety Reporting System (ASRS) to identify issues in the aviation system which need to be addressed. The program of which this system is a part is described in detail in FAA Advisory Circular 00-46D. Your assistance in informing us about such issues is essential to the success of the program. Please fill out this form as completely as possible, enclose in a sealed envelope, affix proper postage, and send it directly to us.

The information you provide on the identity strip will be used only if NASA determines that it is necessary to contact you for further information. THIS IDENTITY STRIP WILL BE RETURNED DIRECTLY TO YOU. The return of the identity strip assures your anonymity.

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Section 91.25 of the Federal Aviation Regulations (14 CFR 91.25) prohibits reports filed with NASA from being used for FAA enforcement purposes. This report will not be made available to the FAA for civil penalty or certificate actions for violations of the Federal Air Regulations. Your identity strip, stamped by NASA, is proof that you have submitted a report to the Aviation Safety Reporting System. We can only return the strip to you, however, if you have provided a mailing address. Equally important, we can often obtain additional useful information if our safety analysts can talk with you directly by telephone. For this reason, we have requested telephone numbers where we may reach you.

Thank you for your contribution to aviation safety.

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DESCRIBE EVENT/SITUATION

Keeping in mind the topics shown below, discuss those which you feel are relevant and anything else you think is important. Include what you believe really caused the problem, and what can be done to prevent a recurrence, or correct the situation. (USE ADDITIONAL PAPER IF NEEDED)

CHAIN OF EVENTS

- How the problem arose
- How it was discovered
- Contributing factors
- Corrective actions

Page 2 of 3

HUMAN PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Perceptions, judgments, decisions
- Actions or inactions
- Factors affecting the quality of human performance

DESCRIBE EVENT/SITUATION, continued...

Page 3 of 3

CHAIN OF EVENTS

- How the problem arose
- Contributing factors
- How it was discovered
- Corrective actions

HUMAN PERFORMANCE CONSIDERATIONS

- Perceptions, judgments, decisions
- Factors affecting the quality of human performance
- Actions or inactions

NASA ARC 277C (January 1994)

Appendix B

Complete report narratives

Example 4.7

606468 (2003-11)

1. PRIOR TO BOARDING, PAX WAS ENGAGED IN A CONVERSATION WITH PAX SVC AGENT IN THE JETBRIDGE.
2. FLT ATTENDANTS #3 AND #5 ASKED IF PAX WAS ABLE TO CONTINUE ON THE FLT.
3. WE AGREED THAT WE WOULD KEEP AN EYE ON PAX DURING THE FLT.
4. APPROX 45 MINS INTO FLT, FLT ATTENDANT #3 CAME UP TO THE FIRST CLASS GALLEY TO TELL US PAX WAS HAVING A SEIZURE.
5. FLT ATTENDANT #5 PAGED FOR MD AND INFORMED THE COCKPIT WHILE I RETRIEVED AED.
6. FLT ATTENDANT #2 RETRIEVED EMER MEDICAL KIT.
7. AS I APCHED AISLE, FLT ATTENDANTS #3 AND #5 WERE PLACING PAX ON THE FLOOR.
8. FLT ATTENDANTS ADMINISTERED OXYGEN.
9. I WENT BACK TO FIRST CLASS GALLEY TO GET SUGAR AND SUGAR WATER, WHICH I HAVE USED ALONG WITH OXYGEN FOR SIMILAR SITS ON MANY FLTS IN THE PAST.
10. AFTER A FEW MINS, PAX BECAME RESPONSIVE AND WAS HELPED BACK TO HIS SEAT.
11. I AND OTHER FLT ATTENDANTS CONTINUED WITH SVC WHILE MEDICAL PERSONS AND 2 FLT ATTENDANTS STAYED WITH PAX.
12. INFORMED COCKPIT.
13. APPROX 15 MINS LATER, PAX WENT INTO ANOTHER SEIZURE AND AGAIN BECAME UNRESPONSIVE.
14. (PAX WAS PLACED ON FLOOR.)
15. I CALLED COCKPIT TO OBTAIN ETA TO MIA AND ETA TO ALTERNATE IF NEEDED.
16. MIA WAS 1 - 1 1/2 HRS AWAY.
17. I WENT BACK TO ASK MD IF HE FELT PAX WOULD BE ALRIGHT TO CONTINUE ON FOR NEXT 1 HR 30 MINS.
18. MD SAID HE COULD BE STABILIZED.
19. I INFORMED COCKPIT AND CONTINUED TO ASSIST FLT ATTENDANT #5 WITH THE SVC.
20. FLT ATTENDANTS IN MAIN CABIN ALSO CONTINUED THEIR SVC, ANSWERING CONCERNED PAX QUESTIONS.
21. MINS LATER, PAX HAD ANOTHER SEIZURE.
22. FLT ATTENDANT #3 ASKED ME FOR THE ENHANCED MEDICAL KIT AND RESUSCITATION BAG.
23. FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED MEDICAL PERSONNEL IN SEVERAL PROCS TO HELP PAX, INCLUDING CPR.
24. I CONTACTED COCKPIT TO DIVERT.
25. FLT ATTENDANTS NOT ASSISTING IN THE EMER PREPARED CABIN FOR LNDG.
26. 2 OR 3 FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED MEDICAL PERSONNEL WHILE WE DSDNDED SO THE REST OF US DECIDED THAT THE REMAINING 4 OF US WOULD EACH MAN A SET OF EXIT DOORS.
27. WERE MET WITH DIFFICULT ARPT OFFICIALS.
28. THE MWCR OFFICIALS WERE VERY UNCOOPERATIVE.
29. AN AGGRAVATING SIT THAT NEVER SHOULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITH AN ESTIMATED 2 HRS TO RESOLVE.
30. PAX WERE ALSO IN DISBELIEF AS FOR THE LENGTH OF TIME IT TOOK TO REMOVE THE DECEASED PAX AND DEPART FOR MIA.
31. FLT ATTENDANT #4 AND I COLLECTED THE USED MEDICAL EQUIP, PLACED ALL USED MEDICAL SUPPLIES IN BIO BAG, PLACED ALL SOILED BLANKETS, PILLOWS AND SEAT CUSHIONS IN BLUE GALLEY BAG.
32. EVERYTHING WENT INTO EMPTY FIRST CLASS CLOSET.
33. AFTER ARR MIA, WE WERE DEBRIEFED BY COMPANY MGRS AND POLICE HOMICIDE.

34. ANOTHER PAX RPTED HE HAD HAD SEVERAL CONVERSATIONS WITH THE NOW DECEASED PAX PRIOR TO BOARDING THE FLT.
35. INFORMED US THAT HE WITNESSED THE DECEASED INHALING COCAINE IN ARPT BATHROOM.

Example 4.10

605017 (2004-01)

1. ON THE SECOND LEG OF OUR TRIP, WE WERE TO FLY FROM SJU-PHL.
2. WHILE BOARDING THE FLT, A PAX COLLAPSED ON THE JETBRIDGE.
3. PARAMEDICS WERE CALLED TO THE GATE.
4. WHEN THEY ARRIVED, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT SHE SHOULD NOT FLY.
5. THEN, WHEN THE LAST PAX WAS BOARDING WE WERE INFORMED THAT SHE WAS CLAUSTROPHOBIC.
6. RIGHT AS THEY WERE CLOSING THE ACFT DOOR THE PAX DECIDED SHE COULD NOT FLY AND HAD TO HAVE HER DEPLANED.
7. AFTER THESE [SITUATIONS], WE DEPARTED ONLY 10 MINS LATE.
8. DURING THE FIRST BEVERAGE SVC, A TEENAGE PAX TRAVELING WITH HIS FATHER HAD A SEIZURE.
9. OUR #2 FLT ATTENDANT ATTENDED TO HIM.
10. HE SEEMED FINE AFTER THE SEIZURE BUT, DURING OUR MEAL SVC, HE HAD 2 MORE SEIZURES.
11. WE PAGED FOR A DOCTOR BUT THERE WAS NO RESPONSE.
12. AFTER THE #3 FLT ATTENDANT SPOKE WITH THE FATHER, WHO SPOKE MOSTLY SPANISH, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE FATHER HAD OVER MEDICATED HIS SON DUE TO A CHANGE OF DOSAGE BY HIS DOCTOR THAT DAY.
13. AFTER THE #1 FLT ATTENDANT SPOKE WITH THE PHYSICIAN ON CALL, IT WAS DECIDED THAT WE WOULD LAND IN TXKF.
14. WE DEPLANED THE FATHER AND SON AND, AFTER REFUELING, WE CONTINUED TO PHL.
15. DURING THE TXKF-PHL SEGMENT 2 PAX COMPLAINED OF MEDICAL SITS.
16. ONE WITH A VERY SWOLLEN LEG THAT WE ELEVATED AND ICED.
17. THE OTHER DID NOT SEEM TO HAVE AN ACTUAL PROB AND WAS DETERMINED TO JUST BE NERVOUS FROM ALL OF THE SITS THAT HAD OCCURRED ON THIS FLT.
18. HE WAS COMFORTED AND HE RELAXED AND WAS FINE.
19. WHEN WE ARRIVED IN PHL, WE HAD 5 WHEELCHAIR PAX, INCLUDING ONE NON-AMBULATORY PAX.
20. ONLY 1 AGENT MET THE FLT SO THE FLT ATTENDANTS ASSISTED THE AGENT IN GETTING THE PAX INTO THE TERMINAL AREA.
21. THE PLTS WERE TRYING TO GET OFF OF THE ACFT AS WE WERE TRYING TO GET THE PAX REQUIRING ASSISTANCE INTO THEIR WHEELCHAIRS.
22. I MADE THE COMMENT THAT I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT THEIR HURRY WAS BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T LEAVE WITHOUT US AND WE COULDN'T DEPLANE UNTIL ALL OF OUR PAX WERE OFF OF THE ACFT.
23. WHEN THE FLT ATTENDANTS ARRIVED AT THE HOTEL PICK UP POINT (WHICH THE PAPERWORK SHOWS 2 LOCATIONS) WE DID NOT SEE A VAN.
24. THE #1 FLT ATTENDANT CALLED THE HOTEL AND FOUND OUT THAT THE PLTS WERE JUST ARRIVING AT THE HOTEL.
25. WE WERE TOLD THAT THE VAN WOULD BE SENT BACK FOR US AND IT WOULD BE ABOUT 10 MINS.
26. I CALLED CREW TRACKING.
27. I INFORMED HIM OF OUR SIT AND OUR ILLEGALITY.
28. OUR ORIGINAL TRIP HAD VERY LITTLE ROOM FOR DELAYS TO MAKE THE LAYOVER TIME LEGAL.
29. CREW TRACKING SAID TO CALL WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE HOTEL FOR OUR NEW SIGN IN TIME FOR THE FOLLOWING DAY.
30. THE FLT ATTENDANTS FINISHED CHKING IN AND RUSHED TO OUR ROOMS TO GET SOME SLEEP AFTER OUR 16 HR DAY.
31. AFTER OUR EMOTIONALLY AND PHYSICALLY DRAINING DAY, WE DID NOT EVEN THINK TO QUESTION THE SIGN IN TIME.
32. WE COULD BARELY STAND, LET ALONE THINK.
33. WE DID KNOW THAT WE HAD A 12 HR DAY FACING US THE NEXT DAY.

34. WE FINALLY HAD A BREAK AFTER THE MEAL SVC THE NEXT DAY AND BEGAN WRITING OUR RPTS.
35. WE REALIZED THAT WE WERE NOT GIVEN OUR LEGAL BREAK THE NIGHT BEFORE.
36. WHEN WE PULLED UP A HARD COPY OF OUR SCHEDULE, WE FOUND OUT THAT INDEED WE WERE SENT OUT ILLEGAL THAT MORNING.
37. WE RECEIVED 8.27 ON PAPER WHICH EQUATES TO ABOUT 5 HRS OF SLEEP IF YOU GO TO BED IMMEDIATELY.
38. WE ARRIVED AT THE HOTEL AROUND XA35 AND BY THE TIME WE ARRIVED IN OUR ROOMS IT WASXA50.
39. MY WAKE UP CALL WAS AT XF30.
40. THE MINIMUM REST BREAK SHOULD BE AUTOMATICALLY GIVEN.
41. WE SHOULD NOT HAVE TO FIGHT FOR IT.
42. WITH ALL OF THE GIVE BACKS THAT WE HAVE HAD TO ENDURE, WE ALSO HAVE TO ENDURE INHUMANE AND UNFAIR TREATMENT?
43. A 16 HR DAY WITH NO FOOD PROVIDED, NO SLEEP, OR RESPECT, AND YET WE PERFORM OUR JOBS WITH SMILING FACES AND CARING HEARTS.
44. WE TOOK CARE OF THE MANY [SITUATIONS] THAT OCCURRED ON THIS FLT WITH PROFESSIONALISM AND COMPASSION.
45. CREWS ARE NOT ALWAYS IN THE [POSITION] TO FIGHT FOR IT DUE TO THE FATIGUE WE ARE NOW EXPERIENCING ON MANY OF OUR TRIPS.
46. WE WERE ON DUTY FOR 28 HRS OUT OF THE 36 HRS AWAY FROM HOME.
47. HOW CAN WE BE AWARE, VIGILANT, AND DOING THE BEST JOB POSSIBLE WITH LONG DUTY DAYS AND LESS THAN MINIMUM REST BREAKS?

Example 4.11

750699 (2007-08)

1. WE GOT ON AND DID OUR SAFETY CHKS.
2. THE CREW SET UP THE GALLEY AND CAME FORWARD TO TALK WHILE WE WAITED UNTIL BOARDING TIME.
3. APPROX 2 MINS PRIOR TO BOARDING WE WENT TO GET INTO POSITION AND THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE NOTICED WATER ON THE FLOOR IN THE REAR OF THE ACFT.
4. WE IMMEDIATELY INFORMED THE CAPT THAT ABOUT 1 INCH OF WATER WAS POOLED IN THE GALLEY AND CREEPING INTO THE CABIN.
5. BY THE TIME THE PROB WAS FIGURED OUT THE WATER WAS UP TO ROW 20.
6. THIS ARPT APPARENTLY DOESN'T OWN A SHOP VAC TO REMOVE THE WATER AND THE COMPANY THAT OUR COMPANY CONTRACTS WITH WAS UNAVAILABLE.
7. THE WATER REMAINED IN THE CABIN FOR 2 HOURS BEFORE A SHOP VAC WAS LOCATED AND IT WAS VACUUMED OUT.
8. THE FLOORS WERE STILL SOPPING WET AND THE GALLEY WAS SLIPPERY.
9. WE USED MOST OF THE BLANKETS TO HELP SOAK UP THE WATER BUT TO NO AVAIL.
10. THE MECHANIC ASSURED US (FLT ATTENDANTS) THAT THERE WASN'T ANY ELECTRICAL WIRES THAT WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE WATER.
11. A MAN CAME UP FROM THE BAGGAGE LOADING SECTION AND COMPLAINED ABOUT ALL THE WATER POURING FROM THE PIT.
12. THE FLT ATTENDANTS WERE DISTINCTLY UPSET AND UNCOMFORTABLE ABOUT TAKING THIS AIRPLANE, BUT WERE ASSURED BY ALL THAT IT WAS PERFECTLY SAFE.
13. THE FIRST PAX ON BOARD PROMPTLY SLIPPED IN THE GALLEY TRYING TO USE THE BATHROOM.
14. ALL THE PAX SITTING IN ROWS 20 THRU 26 HAD WET BAGS AND FEET.
15. THEY ASKED FOR SOME TYPE OF COMPENSATION AND ZZZ1 TOLD THEM THAT ZZZ2 WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM.
16. WHEN WE ARRIVED ZZZ2 SAID THAT THESE PEOPLE'S NEXT DEST WOULD TAKE CARE OF IT, PASSING THE BUCK IT WOULD SEEM!
17. THE WATER CONTINUED TO DRIP THROUGHOUT THE FLT.
18. THE NEXT DAY WE GOT ON BOARD AND DID OUR SAFETY CHKS.
19. THE CABIN CREW SET UP THE GALLEY AND HAD COME FORWARD TO CHAT.
20. I WAS TESTING THE SAFETY VIDEO AND NOTICED THAT WE STILL HAD JULY'S MOVIES.
21. THAT'S WHEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE SAME PLANE AS BEFORE.
22. I CHKED THE RECORDS AND SURE ENOUGH, IT WAS THE SAME PLANE NUMBER.
23. I INFORMED THAT CAPT OF OUR PREVIOUS PROBLEM AND HE SEEMED INCREDULOUS ABOUT THE WHOLE THING.
24. THEN RIGHT BEFORE BOARDING, THE WATER STARTED TO POUR IN AGAIN.
25. WE INFORMED THE CAPT IMMEDIATELY AND HE GOT TO SEE WITH HIS OWN EYES WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO US THE PREVIOUS DAY.
26. HE MADE THE DECISION TO REFUSE THE PLANE BASED ON THE FACT THAT THE PLANE HAD NEVER BEEN FULLY INSPECTED AFTER THE FIRST INCIDENT.
27. HE WANTED THE PANELS PULLED OUT TO MAKE SURE THERE WASN'T ANY DAMAGE FROM ALL THE STANDING WATER.
28. I'M SURE HE HAD OTHER REASONS ONLY PLTS KNOW ABOUT.

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